









THE
MANŒUVRING MOTHER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE HISTORY OF A FLIRT.”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CHAPTER XXII.

Four years passed rapidly and tranquilly at Fairlee. The waters of Lochleven flowed at the foot of its undulating grounds, and the mountains of Glencoe terminated the grandly-beautiful and distant prospect which Christobelle gazed upon with untired delight, from the different points where she loved to sit in meditation, or employed herself in painting its glowing and ever-changing tints. Often did the forms of Anna Maria and Isabel appear before her, as she lingered upon the mountain-tops which overhung the lake, and watched the golden sun sink below the horizon.

Often did the woods and smiling lands of We-

theral appear to her mental view ; and though its scenery, so flatly tame, sank into insignificance before the cloud-capped Cona, and the hills of many names which surrounded the rich and beautiful Lochleven—still, *there* was the remembrance of her first attachments ; there were the forms she loved, and the hearts which loved her, fondly. There was the scene of her infancy, and there she had parted from her kind companion and friend, Sir John Spottiswoode.

Anna Maria's heart and eyes were given exclusively to her excellent husband, and Isabel was devoted to her child ; but Sir John Spottiswoode had been for weeks her instructor, her only attendant, and the depository of her thoughts. She felt the loss of his society for months ; and when she gazed upon the calm lake, or mused upon the rocky heights, each and all threw back her thoughts to Sir John Spottiswoode. Oh ! what would he, the travelled one, the lover of grand scenery—what would *he* say to the bold and graceful scenery ? What would he say to the combination of wood, and rock, and pleasant glens ; the mountains, the water, and all the glorious views which decorated Lochleven ? Surely he would love its repose, its agitations, its sublimity ; surely he would love its groves, its

islands, and its storms. He would roam with her through the lovely glens; they would together visit the falls of Kinlochmore: they would meditate together on Eilan na Corak, and climb the highest points to watch the setting sun, and think upon absent ones. Why had she not a brother to accompany her in her pleasant rambles, and why was he not Sir John Spottiswoode?

Lady Wetheral's health did not recover the shock of Lady Kerrison's death. She sank gradually into an invalid: and, though she rarely visited the beauteous scenes around her, and never admired their grandeur, yet her thoughts rested no longer upon England. She was content to remain at Fairlee, exhausted in body, and depressed in mind. Her temper lost every trace of its former playfulness, and she dwelt constantly and bitterly upon the idea of Clara's ingratitude in not seeing her at the time of her decease. She told Christobelle the voice of Clara came to her in the dead of the night, and thundered in the wind which roared from the mountains. She saw Clara in her dreams ever pointing towards her, and exclaiming, "Oh! hard-hearted mother!" She declared to Christobelle that if her death should prove the con-

sequence of such distressing visitations, she died by the hand of Lady Kerrison, and her ungrateful conduct would have been the means of destroying the author of her existence, and the contriver of her high and enviable establishment. She had indeed heard of ungrateful children; but little could she imagine she was herself to fall a victim to the daughters whom she had reared so carefully. Clara had died, and she expected Julia would be equally undutiful. Not once had she been invited to Bedfordfield, nor was she even apprized of their flight abroad!

Such were Lady Wetheral's feelings; and her irritable and disappointed mind vented its bitterness upon the innocent Christobelle. The leading thought of her heart and the aim of her actions had ever been the establishment of her children, and upon her youngest daughter, now in the midst of suffering and solitude, did her anxiety rest. Christobelle was to beware of the sun and of the dew. It was ruinous to the complexion to sit staring for hours in a hot sun upon nonsensical views, and still worse, to roam about with a plaid round her shoulders, and a hat swinging to her arm, like a low-lived Scotch girl. Lochleven produced much gaiety in the autumn,

as many families thronged to visit lake scenery ; she would therefore feel obliged by Miss Chrystal paying a little more attention to her person, that she might not be recognized as Lady Wetheral's very vulgar daughter, or give occasion of remark to General Ponsonby's family. General Ponsonby, as a man of high connections, might probably have people staying at Clanmoray of some consideration ; and she insisted upon her careful attention to dress and manners. She might meet gentlemen unexpectedly, and a young lady should be upon her guard. No man could be struck with a girl whose tanned complexion gave her the appearance of having tended sheep and goats upon the hill-tops.

In spite of Lady Wetheral's precautions, Christobelle met no gentleman " unexpectedly," nor were her studies interrupted by any people of consideration from Clanmoray. Letters from England told of Mrs. Tom Pynsent's increasing family ; and Isabel's visit was deferred, year after year, by the expected death of Miss Tabitha, whose illness had proved long and suffering. She could not bear to hear or think of her brother's departure from Shropshire while she still lingered, and Mr. Boscawen had promised to close her eyes ere he quitted Brierly. Isabel's visit,

therefore, must remain uncertain : she was the mother of three children, and her anxiety was very great to exhibit them all at Fairlee, and listen to the roar of the cataracts with Christobelle.

There was also news of Julia. The party had returned to Bedinfield, and Colonel Neville was still in the suite of the Countess-dowager ; but few ever penetrated into the mysteries of Bedinfield. The Ennismores saw little company, and it was reported the establishment consisted chiefly of foreigners selected by the Countess mother. Colonel Neville remained desperately attached to Julia, and Lord Ennismore rarely quitted his apartments ; his lordship was becoming extremely invalided, and Dr. Anstruther was superseded by a Florence physician.

Mrs. Pynsent wrote frequently to Christobelle, and from her chatty pen, Miss Wetheral received the home news of the south. “ Every one,” she wrote, “ was pretty well except ‘ Bobby,’ who looked very like a turkey with the pip, for his head was sinking between his shoulders, and his poor back got round. However, he played with the eldest boy, and left every thing to Tom, who — God bless him ! — grew handsomer every day, and rattled over business much better than

his poor moonshine father. Sally Hancock sat with him now and then, and her company was getting rather amusing to him : altogether, they were tolerably well at Hatton. Sophy Spottiswoode was married, and they talked of visiting Scotland with Sir John Spottiswoode ; perhaps they would visit Lochleven and Fairlee, and see what was acting there and thereabouts. Sir Jacky seemed to wish to peep about Lochleven, for reasons best known to himself." Mrs. Pynsent ended by hoping Christobelle was not obliged to be in love with some red-headed Scotchman, because he was rich.

Sir John Wetheral twice visited Shropshire during his seclusion at Fairlee, but his daughter could not accompany him. Lady Wetheral's health detained her ; and, during his absence, the magnificence of the country, its quiet grandeur, and its beautiful variety, could not recompense her for the misery she endured under continual and unabated reproaches, or the language of useless complaint, unceasingly uttered in doleful tones. Her ladyship considered her daughter's singlehood at seventeen years of age a severe blow upon her matronly cares. Up to the moment of her seventeenth birthday, Christobelle had never received an offer of marriage,

or heard a comment upon her beauty, save in the somewhat coarse approbation which was bestowed by Mrs. Pynsent upon her growth at Hatton.

Christobelle had never listened to adulation, nor had she ever, in her walks, met a look or observation which could be construed into admiration, or even commendation. She bounded in health and freedom of heart over the mountains, and sailed on the lake with her attendant Janet, without a thought of care, or a wish to shine as her sisters had done, before her entrance into society. She wished her father alone to share in her rambles; if her fancy ever strayed beyond his presence, it was in a sigh to think how greatly she should enjoy the surprise and pleasure which Sir John Spottiswoode must feel, if he ever beheld the scenery of Lochleven. But it was not so with Lady Wetheral.

Every year brought newly-awakened annoyance to Christobelle, in the ironical tone of her mother's birthday congratulation: and it brought equal affliction to her ladyship, that she must still endure the society of a daughter unsought, and very probably destined to remain single. Her father was in England when she received congratulations upon attaining her seventeenth

year. Sir John promised to reach Fairlee, if possible, in time to spend that day with his daughter at the falls of Kinlochmore; but it was not to be so, and she entered the breakfast-room that morning depressed and without appetite. Lady Wetheral commenced her attack.

“I believe, Bell, you are now seventeen. I beg to offer my congratulations upon the effect you have created at Lochleven. Clara and Isabel were married at your age, and I am expecting every day to be consulted upon some affair of your own. You appear to have made no impression upon young Ponsonby, after all your walks and sails upon the water.”

“Young Ponsonby, mamma!”

“Some people never care to understand what they do not wish to know,” replied her mother. “In the precincts of Lochleven your want of power to please may pass unobserved, but I should have been pointed at in England, as a mother hopeless of her daughter’s establishment.”

“But young Ponsonby never walks and sails with *me*, mamma. I am only accompanied by Janet.”

“I am perfectly aware that Janet is your only companion,” replied her mother, drily.

“ I never wished to be with Mr. Ponsonby, mamma. I declined Miss Ponsonby’s invitation to join her party at Ballahuish.”

“ You did very unwisely. I wish you to join the Ponsonby parties. Have I not told you repeatedly that wish ?”

“ I thought you would be alone, mamma.”

“ I should be much obliged by your thinking to more purpose, Bell. I never wish to interfere with your engagements, when they tend to a proper end.”

“ But what end could be answered at Ballahuish, mamma ?”

“ You are growing extremely disagreeable and argumentative, Miss Wetheral. I will trouble you to withhold your rather imperious questionings, if you please.”

Christobelle was silent, and Lady Wetheral proceeded with her breakfast ; but nothing met her approbation. The coffee was cold, the eggs were not fresh, and the rolls were burnt. Everything was most uncomfortable since she had quitted England—particularly uncomfortable, since no one was near her to make her wants a matter of the least consideration.

Christobelle offered to ring for hot coffee.

“ I shall be obliged by your remaining where

you are, if you please. Ingratitude is nothing new to me: Clara taught me *that* parental misery—I can bear it now with patience. Clara has ruined my health by her ungrateful conduct. I, who sought her advancement in life, and who almost made the offer to establish her at Ripley, deserved a better fate than to be spurned from her dying bed, and see Mrs. Pynsent preferred before me. I cannot understand a coarse personage like Mrs. Pynsent being a proper attendant upon a deathbed. Her loud voice would disturb the dead.”

“But she was so gentle and kind to Clara! She was so attentive, papa said!”

“I shall never believe it.”

“But you remember how very kindly she assisted me, and how tenderly she nursed you, mamma.”

“I was not on my deathbed. Close that window, Bell, the wind is rising; and do shut out the sound of those French horns.”

Christobelle rose to obey. Two small vessels were traversing the loch, containing a party of pleasure, apparently intending to pass the morning in the island which was once the prison-house of Mary. A band of French horns woke the echoes as they rowed along, and the air of

“Auld lang syne,” delightfully played in parts, riveted her attention. For a few moments she paused to listen, but the sounds affected Lady Wetheral beyond endurance : she trembled and wept. Christobelle closed the window.

“I cannot bear those sounds,” she cried, clasping her hands. “I hear Clara’s voice, and she persists in calling me her hard-hearted mother. Her voice is in every sound, and that tone kills me. I am not hard-hearted — I am an injured mother, worn down by that ungrateful voice. I hear it in the winds at night, and the breeze of the lake whispers it. I cannot bear to hear Clara’s voice.”

Christobelle endeavoured to calm her mother’s nerves, but repeated attacks had destroyed their tone, and she could not rally at pleasure. Mrs. Bevan was summoned to attend her lady, and she was laid upon her bed to receive the usual remedies. Her ladyship was then left in quiet and in darkness for some hours. This scene was but the recurrence of a now constantly repeated attack of the nerves upon every sound which reached her ear from without. The storm, the breeze, the sighing of the winds, the soft and delicious music which occasionally rose on the air, all created the same terror—it was Clara reproach-

ing her for youth and happiness blasted, and constantly exclaiming, “ Oh, hard-hearted mother ! ”

Time increased the disorder. Four years’ residence in Scotland, far from the scene of Clara’s tragic departure, and removed beyond all allusion to the events which had occurred, did not soften by distance the regrets of Lady Wetheral’s heart. Year after year brought increased nervousness ; and Sir John had endeavoured to lead his lady’s thoughts again towards Wetheral, but in vain. “ She had resolved never again to visit a country which had brought her so much disquietude. Clara was gone—gone from her for ever, tainted with bitter ingratitude, and the grandeur of Lady Ennismore’s establishment was to her a blank—she had never witnessed it. All that she had most anxiously desired had become a source of misery to her feelings, and she only desired now to live far away from painful associations.” Sir John pointed out the near neighbourhood of her two happily-married daughters, Pynsent and Boscawen ; but it failed to create pleasing thoughts.

“ No, I have no wish to see those objects which will remind me of Julia’s banishment and Clara’s death. If they are happy, why was not

Julia to be with me, and why was Clara ungrateful? Why was *I* to be defeated in my views? Why was Julia carried abroad without one interview with the mother who endured so much to secure her establishment, without even writing to me? No; I am miserable, but let me alone, and let me die here !”

Lady Wetheral would at such moments turn to Miss Wetheral with looks of reproach, and inveigh against her unattractive appearance or manner.

“ If you wished to give me pleasure, Bell, you would not fly in my face, as Clara did. If you attended to your person, I might yet be gratified by hearing praises of your beauty, and receive pleasure in contemplating your future establishment; but I have no hopes for you. I have no inducement to quit this dreary Lochleven. I will not carry forth a daughter who is blind to her own advancement, or subject myself to ridicule, by the constant appendage of a young woman who is likely to pass single to her grave. If I could rouse you to exertion, I might rally too; but this determined indifference to future distinction destroys me. I am doomed to suffer every gradation of parental disappointment.”

What hand could pluck from her ladyship's me-

mory “this rooted sorrow?” What hand could cleanse her bosom of this “perilous stuff?” Haman knew no peace while Mordecai sat at the king’s gate, and Lady Wetheral would not be comforted, because the eye of admiration had not yet glanced upon Christobelle, or opened a channel for her energies to rise again under the exciting employment of speculating upon her future establishment. What a life was this! After Lady Wetheral’s departure to her room, under the nervous effect produced by the lake music, Christobelle strolled along its banks, accompanied by Janet. The little band still poured their sounds upon the breeze, as they sat listening to the sprightly notes of “Will ye gang to the bourne, my Marion:” and at its conclusion Christobelle’s eager fancy suggested the idea of sailing towards the Isle, to enjoy the softly-swelling sounds which now but faintly stole upon the ear. The boatmen were quickly summoned to their oars, and Christobelle ordered them to stretch and lie to, under the Isle, where the party were seated beneath the trees, which once afforded shade to the royal Mary in her captivity.

A boat put out from the land as they approached, and Christobelle saw the figures of Miss Ponsonby and her brother Charles seated

in its stern. Miss Ponsonby waved her hand as the boat glided to her side, and hailed her "prisoner." A large party from Clanmoray were regaling in the "Douglas Isle," and her movements had been watched through many telescopes. Miss Wetheral had declined her party to Ballahuish; but her captivity was now as sure as that of the unfortunate Queen of Scots, unless a Douglas again rose to the rescue.

"It was a party," Miss Ponsonby said, "in honour of her eldest brother, who had left Ireland on a long furlough, and who had arrived at Clanmoray, after an absence of six years. She would allow no excuses to prevail. Miss Wetheral must and should do honour also to Edward's arrival." Christobelle was loth to obey the mandate: she was quite unprepared for the little incident, and felt alarmed at the idea of encountering a large company almost unknown to her. Miss Ponsonby, however, ordered the boats towards the landing-place, and the party disembarked. The Ponsonby family came forward to welcome Miss Wetheral's arrival, and they introduced her to the assembled group.

The Duke of Forfar, lately raised to the dukedom by the death of his aged father, was present; and there was also young Lord Farn-

borough, once the Selgrave, whose name she trembled to hear from her mother's lips, when she spoke of him as a future suitor. Christobelle saw also Lady Anna Herbert, the imagined rival of Mrs. Charles Spottiswoode in her days of coquetry ; and her mind glanced back to the time when she heard so much and so often of the Farnborough Stacy family. Lady Anna Herbert was still unmarried, and she could perceive the same lively manners, the same coquettish look, which had so formidably alarmed the fears of Miss Wycherly.

His Grace politely acknowledged his intimate acquaintance with her family, and his pleasure at being able to renew it with a daughter of Sir John Wetheral upon the distant Lochleven. He had no remembrance of Miss Wetheral, but young people sprung up around him into life. His Grace had heard of a beauteous scion, unseen at Wetheral Castle, but it was reserved to him to meet her for the first time, on poetical and historical ground—on the very spot where the beautiful Mary of Scotland landed in misfortune, a captive beauty, such as the vision which now met his eye.

“ Well done, papa !” cried Lady Anna, “ your imagination is awakened by this scene, and Miss

Wetheral has fortunately appeared to keep up the illusion. Miss Wetheral, you should reply in character, and papa will be charmed."

"If Miss Wetheral will personate the afflicted queen," said Lord Farnborough, "I must beg to enact the faithful Douglas, and aid her escape."

"Very good, let it be so," replied his Grace of Forfar: "this is the very spot to renew our recollections. Who will be the warder, Lady Douglas?"

"If I can in any way represent the character, I shall be happy to look the grim gaoler," answered Lady Anna Herbert.

Christobelle stood confused and blushing, amid the group of strangers who gathered round her. Among the gaily-apparelled females, she alone appeared rudely clad in the costume of the country; she alone wore the plaid and bonnet which decorated the humble inhabitants of Kinross, and the hamlets around Lochleven. She felt for the moment distressed at her appearance, so distinct from the party with whom she was destined to mix. Her confusion was apparent to the polite Miss Ponsonby. She took her hand.

"Miss Wetheral is all good-nature to obey

my bidding, and we are happy in having *one* of our number, at least, attired in proper costume. Lady Anna, how came we to plan our day's amusement, and yet forget the most material subject of dress?"

"You have ruined the effect of our *tout-ensemble* by your sudden appearance, Miss Wetheral," observed Lord Farnborough; "we thought ourselves unique, and you only exhibit our deficiencies. You are often here, I presume."

"It has been a favourite spot of mine these four years," replied Christobelle, slightly confused.

"You are then the genius of the place, Miss Wetheral. Will you point out to me the favourite haunts of your long seclusion, and do the honours of Lochleven to a stranger?"

Christobelle was very willing to be the stranger's guide; and she found herself shortly after her arrival in "the Douglas Isle," seated between Miss Ponsonby and Lord Farnborough, pointing out the beauties of the lake scenery. Miss Ponsonby smiled at her enthusiastic descriptions.

"After this specimen of your powers, Miss Wetheral, do not hope to escape me in future. You would have graced our quiet bivouac at Ballahuish. No one spoke a word, or com-

mented upon the luxuriant lake, there. No one possessed your happy taste for the romantic ; or they kept it all to themselves at Ballahuish. To be sure, Lord Farnborough was not with us."

"Are you so fond of scenery, my lord?" asked Christobelle, turning towards her other companion.

"Yes, his lordship is a poet and a painter," replied Miss Ponsonby; "he must, therefore, necessarily love the stupendous and the beautiful, such as now lies before us. His lordship muses at the view of Ossian's 'Cona,' and writes verses upon Ballahuish ferry."

"Miss Ponsonby is pleased to be merry at my expense," said Lord Farnborough; "nevertheless, I worship Nature's beautiful productions."

"Then you must visit the falls of Kinlochmore, my lord; and if you are poetical, muse over those mountain-tops, and visit the little ruin of St. Mungo's Isle, to hear the breeze murmur of the clans of Glencoe and Lochaber."

"Will you, the presiding spirit, attend me there?" asked Lord Farnborough.

"We will *all* attend you," cried Miss Ponsonby. "The more spirits the better, my lord, upon such a mission. Miss Wetheral, you will

promise to attend my summons to St. Mungo's Isle."

"If I can quit Fairlee for a whole day, I shall be happy to attend you."

"But mind, Miss Wetheral, I insist upon your costume; you look now like the ghost of Scotland flitting among the barbarians who have ravaged her soil, and changed her customs."

Christobelle continued some time in the island with Miss Ponsonby and Lord Farnborough, as the party formed in little groups under the trees, to gaze upon the calm lake and its beautiful shores, and they wandered round the tower and its precincts, which once held a queen of Scotland in durance. Christobelle thought Lord Farnborough spoke with feeling upon the events of Lochleven Castle; and she contemplated his intelligent countenance with an interest remote from the fear which took possession of her mind, when her lady mother first urged her intention that she should marry Lord Selgrave.

They were soon deeply engaged in Scottish history, following the current of events which closed the reign and life of Mary; and though Miss Ponsonby contended that her existence proved a course of wicked efforts to gain the English crown, and raise rebellion in her cousin's

dominions, Christobelle defended the beautiful captive, with all the rhetoric of youthful enthusiasm. It was, however, time to return to Fairlee, and Christobelle could no longer linger with her friends in the Douglas Isle. General Ponsonby and Lord Farnborough gallantly escorted her into the little vessel which had awaited her commands, and where Janet still sat in expectation of her return. Mr. Ponsonby returned to the company with his father, as the boatmen pushed from the shore, but Lord Farnborough bounded into the vessel, and took his seat by the side of Christobelle, ere it drove from its mooring. He meant, he said, to see her land safely on the grounds of Fairlee, and it was useless to deny him the pleasure, or, he might say, the propriety of accompanying her across the lake.

The vessel at that moment left the shore, and the little horn band almost instantly played with great taste, "My heart's in the Highlands." Christobelle turned her head towards the shore, and gazed upon the gay groups preparing for an early meal. Their forms gradually receded from view, and were lost in the distance; but the music continued its dying strains, and fell fainter and fainter upon the breeze. The silence

was unbroken for some time, as they crossed the slumbering lake ; but Lord Farnborough, at last, broke the stillness of the scene by asking Christobelle if she amused herself in sketching the lovely views on either side Lochleven. From this question, answered in the affirmative, they entered upon the subject of painting, which gradually led to its sister art—poetry ; and Christobelle was delighted to know that when they visited St. Mungo's Isle, she would judge of his progress in both departments. They were both to go provided with drawing materials ; and, if Christobelle insisted upon it, his lordship would submit a few poetic inspirations to her “ better judgment,” upon a rock overhanging the lake, even before the party took place.

It was not to be supposed that their acquaintance would end here, after the pleasures of the morning. His lordship entreated permission to wait upon Miss Wetheral at Fairlee, and he hoped to renew the happiness of the last two hours in many agreeable walks and drives in the splendid scenes of Lochleven. Christobelle trusted Lord Farnborough's polite wishes might indeed be fulfilled ; she was quite willing to be pleased by the society of a pleasant young man, whose conversation was so entertaining, and who

appeared to be so gifted in the arts of music, painting, and poetry—arts so admired and valued by her taste. She told his lordship she was sure her mother would receive his visits with pleasure. “But will *you* receive them with pleasure?” he asked, as the little vessel glided into the cove from which it embarked; “will *you*, Miss Wetheral, admit my visits with pleasure, and allow me sometimes to join you in your walks and musings?”

How could Christobelle object? yet she made no reply, or even answered his appealing look. The young lord’s countenance fell.

“You will not speak to me, Miss Wetheral; you will not say I am welcome at Fairlee sometimes.”

“My mother will be glad to see you, I am sure, Lord Farnborough,” she replied, confusedly, a second time.

“My wish is to join you occasionally in your rides, Miss Wetheral, and *you* must assure me I shall not be considered an intruder.”

Christobelle’s confusion increased at this speech, and at the earnest look which Lord Farnborough cast upon her. She could only stammer forth an assurance that she must be very happy also to see his lordship whenever he paid a visit to

Fairlee ; and that assurance gave her companion confidence to urge the necessity of escorting her to the very door of her home. This Christobelle declined, with a seriousness which forbade remonstrance ; she had Janet with her, and Fairlee lay too near the lake to allow of any fears for her safety. She, therefore, took leave of his lordship, as he assisted her to quit the little vessel which belonged to the Cove of Fairlee, and which her father dedicated to her exclusive use. Lord Farnborough lingered a few moments.

“ Miss Wetheral, we shall meet again before the party to St. Mungo’s Isle takes place.”

“ When may we expect you at Fairlee, my lord ?”

“ To-morrow. Promise me you will not go out till I come.”

“ I seldom leave the grounds before two o’clock. Remember the effusions you promised I should see.”

“ Will you read them, and judge a poor poet mercifully ?”

“ I shall say exactly what I think, my lord.”

“ Then I stand condemned at once.”

“ Perhaps not ; adieu, my lord !”

“But one moment, Miss Wetheral. How anxious you are to escape!”

“I have left my mother some hours alone. I must return to her, and account for my absence, Lord Farnborough.”

“It is not anxiety then to leave me, to get rid of me, Miss Wetheral?”

“No, indeed!”

“Then farewell for many dull hours. The Douglas Isle will have no charms for me, since the genius of Lochleven is withdrawn.”

Lord Farnborough respectfully bowed, and re-entered the boat. Christobelle went forwards with Janet, but curiosity induced her to look back upon the lake, as they gained a rising ground about five hundred yards from the shore. The vessel was again traversing the water, and Lord Farnborough was watching their receding steps, as he stood with folded arms in the stern of the mimic sloop. He waved his handkerchief as Christobelle stood for a moment to contemplate the scene; she waved her plaid in answer to the signal. Twice were the signals exchanged, at separate intervals, till a grove of firs closed the lake from her view; and then she walked on, slowly and silently to the house.

She did not utter a word to her companion

and attendant, the patient Janet; her mind was revolving the events of the day, and it dwelt with peculiar interest upon the unexpected appearance of Lord Farnborough and his family, on a solitary island of Lochleven. It was most extraordinary that her introduction to Lord Farnborough should take place then and there—that her first interview with the Selgrave of former days, whose very name brought tears into her eyes, should be one of extreme interest — nay, of growing intimacy; that she was now to be accompanied in her rides and walks by this once hated lord; and that, without an effort on her mother's part, they had themselves agreed to draw, to sing, to become companions together, in the wild mountains of Scotland, when none were near to urge the introduction, or plan the scheme of their amusements.

While her mother lay in darkness, dwelling upon the evil destiny of Clara, ignorant even of her amusements, she had become known to the Selgrave of her former speculation; and without her knowledge and concurrence, his lordship was engaged to visit Fairlee! How wonderfully did events arrange themselves without human interference, and how foolishly did she, in younger days, reject the idea of becoming ac-

quainted with a young man whom she had never seen, and could not justly deprecate ! How could she ever attach a feeling of dislike to a creature so intelligent, so agreeable, so very attentively polite ! How rash to judge of any human being, unknown and unseen !

Whatever her youthful fancy conjured up to deform the image of “ Lord Selgrave ” in her mental reveries, not a feeling separate from admiration and pleased remembrance hovered round her meditations upon Lord Farnborough, at this period of time. Christobelle was deeply engaged with her own thoughts when she entered the hall at Fairlee. Silence reigned in its precincts, and she looked forward to hours of irritable conference with her mother, ere she could press her silent pillow, and think unrestrainedly of all that had passed. Yet, she heard voices in the sitting-room ; and, above all, she heard her mother’s voice in its long-lost tones of playfulness, addressing a stranger. She heard two voices reply. One she recognized to be her father’s beloved tones. He was then arrived : he had fulfilled his word of promise to be with her on her birthday at last ! Christobelle entered the room in haste, and flew into his arms.

“I thought you could not return so soon, papa; I had quite given up the idea of seeing you till June: how good this is of you, my own dear papa!”

“I have kept my word, Chrystal, to salute you upon your birthday. I made great efforts to achieve the journey in time, and I have brought another friend to congratulate you upon your looks and studies.” Christobelle turned towards the stranger, and a cry of pleasure burst from her lips; it was Sir John Spottiswoode. The sight of her instructor, her companion, her kindest friend, at once obliterated all other thoughts, and she caught his offered hand with feelings of most enviable enjoyment. She had now again a companion to ramble with, to talk with. She would no more mourn under her mother’s petulance, or roam the borders of Lochleven unattended. Christobelle did say to him at that joyful moment — and she said it in sincerity — “Oh! now I *shall* be happy — now I *shall* have you always with me again!”

Sir John Spottiswoode expressed his equal pleasure at the meeting, and he complimented Christobelle upon her appearance of perfect health. It was a grateful satisfaction to find she had not forgotten him. He remembered,

with interest, their former studies, and he expected to be astonished by her rapid progress in every pursuit, during the long interregnum of four years. Christobelle assured him of his mistake.

“I have been a wild creature for years, and, except in drawing and music, I have not done credit to your instructions. You will be obliged to begin my education again, Sir John.”

“Bell is a dear, flighty girl,” said Lady Wetheral, in affectionate accents, which had never yet gladdened her daughter’s heart at Fairlee—“Bell is wild as the curlews upon the lake. She requires your society to tame her flights. She has been absent now three long hours.”

“I have seen extraordinary things, and extraordinary people,” Christobelle exclaimed, as she doffed her mountain-cap, and took Sir John Spottiswoode’s offered seat.

“In that dress, my love?—surely not in that dress, Bell?”

“I have been among the high ones of the land,” continued Christobelle, in high spirits, delighted at being with her father, and near Sir John Spottiswoode. “I have been among the

gay Southrons in Douglas Isle, and a peer of the realm has escorted me across the lake."

Lady Wetheral looked incredulous, and somewhat offended. Christobelle was obliged to detail the events of the morning, to mitigate the rising storm; and what a change came over her ladyship's countenance, as her daughter mentioned the attention and intended visit of Lord Farnborough!—joy sparkled in her eyes, and excitement drew her form to its utmost height. She did not answer—words were too feeble to express her deep gratification.

"What sort of a looking person is Lord Farnborough, now?" asked Sir John Spottiswoode.

"Most intelligent, most agreeable," she replied, "but not handsome. I do not consider him handsome."

"Are they here for any length of time?"

"I cannot tell; they attend a party to St. Mungo's Isle soon, which I am engaged to join. But *you* will go with me now: I shall delight in shewing you the lions of Lochleven. Shall we take a walk after dinner? I long to shew you the beauteous spots, where I have sat so often and so long, thinking of England, and wishing you were here to enjoy it with me."

“ I am ready to attend you over hill and dale,” replied Sir John Spottiswoode—“ over mountain, and through glen.”

“ That is delightful. After dinner, then, we will set forth.”

Christobelle had a packet of letters to read from Shropshire, entrusted to her father’s care ; and, till the dressing-bell sounded, she was engaged in devouring their contents. All were well in England. Isabel wrote only of her children, and she wished to exhibit them at Fairlee, if Miss Tabitha’s health would only allow the visit—but she would neither die nor get well. Anna Maria detailed the delights of the winter’s sport in Shropshire, and triumphed in the glory of her husband. They had thirty-seven “brushes” of the last season, which the children played with in the hall, and Tom had been in at the death of each. The eldest boy, Tom, could roar “Tally-ho” as loud as the whipper-in, and the girl climbed trees like a squirrel. Mrs. Pynsent added a short postscript of one line, “Take care of Sir Jacky, Miss Bell.”

Christobelle involuntarily raised her eyes towards Sir John Spottiswoode, as she smiled at the concise charge. He was gazing earnestly upon her ; her eye sank under the expression of

his fixed attention, and she resumed her reading ; but a deep blush painfully suffused her cheek. She had met no closely-fixed observation till this moment, and she knew Sir John Spottiswoode's eye was still upon her. She did not dare meet his glance again.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“And you really have wished to lead me through these romantic scenes?” said Sir John Spottiswoode, as Christobelle leaned upon his arm, on the very spot where she parted with Lord Farnborough in the morning; “you have seriously thought of your old friend during his absence, and wished him with you?”

“Yes; every storm which disturbed the lake, and every sunny gleam which gilded its tranquillity, made me think of you, and wish you by my side to enjoy it.”

“Perhaps I was equally anxious to find myself strolling with you on these magnificent shores.”

“You were otherwise engaged,” she replied, quickly; “you had affairs to arrange, and property to amuse and interest your thoughts; but I have had no companion for years, to enliven

my hours of solitary walks. I thought of you, when you were too busy to consider me."

"My thoughts were not always employed in Worcestershire, Miss Wetheral; but take me to your haunts, and let me see the views you have so long contemplated."

Christobelle led her companion to the cliff, where she usually passed her morning hours in alternate reading and meditation, and they seated themselves in a natural, rocky seat, which had been worn by time into something like a shapely kind of harbour, for the rock arched over their heads sufficiently deep to afford shelter against heat and showers; and under its rudely constructed roof Christobelle had passed many hours of each successive day, when the weather permitted her to escape from Fairlee. She pointed the attention of her friend to the grandly-indented cliffs which guarded Lochleven—the islets which appeared to slumber on its bosom—the plain of Kinross—its humble abodes—its little church, and the solitary magnificence of the whole scene. "Confess," she said, "that this is a scene worthy to compete with the boasted views abroad. Confess that Lochleven is matchless in its golden sunset, its bracing air, and calmly-beautiful waters. Does not this

glowing scene fill your mind with wonder and praise? does it not give soothing thoughts of a great and wonderful Providence, who has created such scenes for his creatures?"

Sir John Spottiswoode stood some time in contemplation, and he was silent during his companion's enthusiastic descriptions: at last, he turned towards her with a smile.

"I have seen many lakes—beautiful lakes, Miss Wetheral, but I cannot say I ever looked upon their scenery with the feelings I now enjoy, in gazing upon Lochleven."

"You will admire every bend of this graceful water," she replied, pleased with his admiring gaze, as he fixed his eyes upon Lochleven; "I must shew you every lovely appendage by degrees. To-morrow we will visit the ferry of Ballahuish—no, not to-morrow...."

"And why not to-morrow?" asked Sir John Spottiswoode.

Christobelle could not tell why she coloured at the question, or why she turned her face from the speaker towards the Douglas Isle. Sir John Spottiswoode repeated his question.

"But why not to-morrow, Miss Wetheral? Why cannot we begin our tour to-morrow?"

“I believe the Duke of Forfar calls at Fairlee to-morrow,” she replied.

“Will that detain *you*?” said her companion, looking at her with a smile.

“Not altogether — no. Lord Farnborough said something about coming too; and, as he named the time, I think perhaps I ought to remain at home.”

“I do not know the nature of the understanding implied by the mention of the intended visit to you,” observed Sir John Spottiswoode, “therefore I cannot offer an opinion.”

“Oh! there was nothing implied—no absolute—I made no promise of any kind.”

“You did not engage to remain at Fairlee?”

“Certainly not — no, I may say, certainly not.”

“Then let us proceed on our little tour to-morrow.”

Christobelle was caught in her own mesh. She had assuredly made no engagement—no actual engagement; but there was an implied consent on her part to Lord Farnborough’s hope of finding her at home. She had not courage to confess this to Sir John Spottiswoode—and why was she guilty of evasion? She must now relinquish all thought of meeting Lord Farn-

borough at Fairlee. Christobelle sat meditating her disappointment for some moments.

“Miss Wetheral,” said her companion, after a short silence, “did you ever see Lord Farnborough before the meeting of this morning?”

Christobelle started at the sound of Lord Farnborough’s name, but she answered truly, “Never.”

“Are you acquainted with his lordship’s character?”

“No, indeed; my only knowledge of Lord Farnborough began, and may perhaps end, in this morning’s interview.”

“Lord Farnborough’s character at college was designated as fair and false,” observed Sir John Spottiswoode.

“Was it!”

“A fellow-collegian of his lordship’s, Beverly, resides near Alverton. He gave me the character I now describe to you.”

Christobelle felt uncomfortable at Sir John Spottiswoode’s information. It is always painful to hear depreciating accounts of those we admire, or from whom we have received kindness. She knew nothing of Lord Farnborough—his lordship was nothing to her; but she regretted so agreeable a person should prove

otherwise than estimable. Could Mr. Beverly's testimony be depended upon? Character should not be lightly treated: if Lord Farnborough's character was at the mercy of Mr. Beverly, it was but fair to ascertain Mr. Beverly's claims to belief. Under this impression, Christobelle hastily uttered her thoughts, after a second pause.

"Pray, Sir John, who is Mr. Beverly?"

"A neighbour in Worcestershire, and one of the best fellows in England. Why do you ask?"

"Because I think your friend is ungenerous, in speaking harshly of Lord Farnborough, who perhaps never offended him."

"Beverly was once deeply offended by Lord Farnborough," replied Sir John Spottiswoode.

"Therefore, your friend is revengeful," she answered, quickly.

"Beverly has borne his injuries like a man, and like a Christian," returned Sir John. "All injuries should be forgiven; but some cannot be forgotten till memory fails."

Again the little band of French horns swelled upon the still air, and the two vessels, which had sailed to the Douglas Isle, emerged from its deep shadow. Christobelle started up.

“They are returning to Clanmoray so late! Oh! listen to that sweet, soft air.”

The simple strain of “Farewell to Lochaber” stole softly on their ear, and they sat silently gazing upon the little vessels, as they neared the cliff. Suddenly the music broke off, as if an accident had occurred; but the pause was of short duration—it was again broken by the lively and stirring notes of “My love she’s but a lassie yet.” The blood mounted to Christobelle’s forehead with undisguised pleasure and surprise. She was discovered in her retreat by the party below, and an indescribable feeling shot across her heart, as it grasped at the idea that Lord Farnborough had chosen the air, and that he had commanded its execution, as the vessel passed the cliff. She leaned over the rocks, which formed a barricade before the rural seat, and in fancy she could distinguish the tall, slight figure of his lordship, standing in the stern, with folded arms, as he stood when she waved her plaid in the morning. Christobelle watched the vessel with intense attention, as it glided on, and exclaimed, with eager satisfaction,

“I see him!—I could point him out among a hundred!”

“Whom do you see?” asked Sir John Spottis-

woode, as he rose and advanced to her side—"Whom are you noting?"

Christobelle did not immediately reply. She continued gazing upon the lake, and several of the party were also observing them through their telescopes from below.

"But, tell me, Miss Wetheral, whom you note among a hundred, in that party," repeated Sir John Spottiswoode.

"He is standing with—no, he is sitting—that very large personage, the Duke of Forfar—you know the Duke of Forfar?"

"Oh yes, I see. How gratified his Grace would be at the knowledge of having attracted your observation! I think I see Lord Farnborough."

"Whom do you see?—I fancy I recognise Lady Anna Herbert's feather; and there is kind Miss Ponsonby," replied Christobelle, colouring.

"Lord Farnborough is standing in the stern of the vessel, Miss Wetheral: he is waving something—his handkerchief. Who is he waving to?"

A little conscious feeling prevented Christobelle from returning the salutation. She feared Sir John Spottiswoode would observe and smile at her action. She wished he had not told her Lord Farnborough was considered "fair and

false." She had no belief in the insinuation, but it caused a very unpleasant restraint. The vessel passed under the jutting rocks immediately below them, and it was obscured for a time: when it reappeared, the distance did not allow them to distinguish the party. They heard the full notes of the French horns, however, till a headland concealed the vessels from sight; and, ere the last faint note died away, the sun was considerably below the horizon. Christobelle and her companion returned to Fairlee at the moment the servants were passing through the hall with coffee.

The evening passed in conversation upon the past and present, and Sir John Spottiswoode's society made Christobelle speedily forget the attentions of Lord Farnborough. The compliments of an attractive and agreeable person, for a few hours, could not compete with the presence of a dear friend, whose taste had led her own in many instances, and who had devoted so much time to accomplish her talents for music and painting. That friend had been remembered during an absence of four years; he had been often apostrophized in solitary walks, and she had wished in silence and sincerity to renew their pleasant intercourse. That boon was now

granted. Sir John Spottiswoode was again her companion, and what desire of her heart remained ungratified?

Christobelle laid her head upon her pillow, that night, in peaceful thoughts; and if Lord Farnborough occasionally flitted before her eyes—if the air of “My love is but a lassie yet” lingered upon her ear—yet Sir John Spottiswoode filled her mind. His dark hair, curling in rich profusion over his brow—his manly expression—that benevolent dark blue eye—who was equal to him in excellence?—nay, who was superior, even in those evanescent gifts which captivate the eye of woman? Whom did she love and venerate equal to Sir John Spottiswoode?

The following morning produced a long and perplexing conversation between the mother and daughter, which extinguished all Christobelle’s happy feelings. No two beings could possibly be more opposed in feeling, in sentiment, and in action; and never yet did a colloquy take place, without heart-burning arising on one side, and distressed feelings on the other part, to sever the ties between parent and child. In this morning’s conference their opinions jarred more painfully than ever; for they were now in ac-

tual collision upon points which must materially affect Christobelle's happiness, and her future respectability of conduct. It took place after breakfast, while the gentlemen were perambulating the terrace, and ordering the horses for an intended ride. Lady Wetheral commenced her attack with that flattering address which gains so much influence over poor human nature.

"My dear Bell, the arrival of your old friend has produced wonderful effects. I am gratified at seeing your eyes sparkle, and your expression of countenance become animated. I may confess I am pleased at beholding my quiet daughter transformed into a beauty, by the mere play of pretty coquetry which Sir John Spottiswoode's arrival has called forth."

"I detest coquettes and coquetry," answered Christobelle, seriously, though she was not insensible to the agreeable intimation of her suddenly acquired beauty.

"Nonsense, Bell; it is a woman's most potent argument—it is her most powerful weapon—it is her most precious gift—because it is her greatest attraction: do not undervalue it."

"I have not been many hours in Sir John Spottiswoode's company, mamma. If I felt inclined to coquet, I have had no opportunity."

“ A mother’s eyes are open, when the daughter’s eyes are closed,” replied Lady Wetheral, with her most winning smiles. “ I dare say you were not aware how prettily your eyes sought, and fell beneath Sir John’s glances, last night, and at this morning’s breakfast. I congratulate you, Bell, upon a gift which will create more decided effects from your ignorance of possessing it. But I wish to call your attention to my anxious wishes—I wish you to attend to my counsel, and I wish you to act by my advice.”

“ What is your counsel, mamma?”

“ I have never yet failed in establishing my daughters,” her ladyship continued, “ because they acted upon my advice, without arguing its propriety. Julia and Clara acted solely by my wishes, and they won their high establishment.”

“ Poor Clara!” exclaimed Christobelle, involuntarily.

“ It is useless to pity those who would not conform to the proprieties of life,” replied Lady Wetheral. “ I gave Clara to Sir Foster, with long and serious entreaties to avoid all public scenes and altercations with her husband. I never countenanced opposition in a wife. I implored Clara to be obedient in appearance—so much can be done by prudent management! I

never contradicted her father in my life. I effected all my plans without a single quarrel. There is no occasion to quarrel in matrimony. A woman's influence is and must be felt; but it ends the instant you appear to contend. Clara was ungrateful to reproach me as the cause—the idea always makes me nervous.”

Her ladyship applied lavender-water to her forehead and handkerchief, and then proceeded.

“ Sir John Spottiswoode will propose to you before he quits Fairlee, but I should wish”—

“ Sir John Spottiswoode propose to *me* !” exclaimed Christobelle, in the utmost astonishment.

“ All that surprise is foolish, Bell. You are now old enough to command those starts and blushes which look so very fresh, so very girlish. I am certain Sir John Spottiswoode will propose, and it rests with yourself to attract Lord Farnborough.”

The blood rushed with impetuous pulsation into the face of Christobelle, and it overspread her forehead, neck, and even her hands: if Lady Wetheral observed the suffusion her words had produced, she affected not to perceive it.

“ I should advise you to be very cautious in your conduct to both gentlemen, my dear Bell.

Do not be seen too exclusively with Sir John Spottiswoode, to attract attention ; and yet, do not check hope on his part. If Lord Farnborough quits Clanmoray without intending anything, or merely flirts with you, then, let Sir John propose. Alverton is an excellent *au pis aller*, but I would rather my dear Bell could be saluted Duchess of Forfar."

It was some moments before Christobelle could rally her thoughts and spirits, after the mention of Lord Farnborough, in the light of a future suitor. For one instant, only, the idea of his lordship's affection shot a gleam of ambition into her mind, but the paltry feeling was soon extinguished for ever, and her heart flew back to the remembered excellence of her former instructor and friend. Her mother watched the workings of her spirit.

"If Lord Farnborough calls to-day, my love, I shall invite him to dinner."

"His lordship is a guest at Clanmoray," observed Christobelle, hastily.

"He will be a guest at Fairlee soon," answered my mother, gaily. "I could fancy myself quite well again, my dear child ; quite alert, as I used to be ; your little '*minauderies*' will raise me into new life and spirits. I am sure

Lord Farnborough is handsome and of high bearing. I am sure he is clever and agreeable; your little coquetries will divert me into health again."

"But, mamma—"

"No 'ifs' and 'buts,' my dear Bell. I have every dependence upon your attractions. Sir John Spottiswoode is astonished at your improved appearance."

"Listen to me, if you please, mamma. I am no coquette; and I would rather die than be considered a character so repugnant to all that is holy and upright."

"My dear girl, forbear sentiment. A little sentiment, if you please, to Lord Farnborough, but not to me."

"I have no wish to marry, mamma," pleaded Christobelle, with earnest seriousness. "I have no wish to leave papa, and—I have no wish to marry Sir John Spottiswoode, and I cannot try to attract any body. Pray, do not advise me to avoid Sir John, or to think of any establishment. Don't let me endure the fate of Clara, or Julia's long banishment."

Lady Wetheral's hands began to tremble, and her features became agitated as she spoke.

"I am well used to disobedience, and this only adds to my accumulation of vexations.

Every thing has conspired to make me miserable, and I have one child left to reproach me with bitterness. How could I expect obedience from a headstrong girl, whose masculine education defies restraint !”

“ Indeed, mamma, I am anxious to do right. Indeed, my wish is to please every one ; but I cannot think it right to treat Sir John Spottiswoode ill.”

“ Who enjoins you to do so ?” said her ladyship, in a querulous tone.

“ I cannot — indeed, I cannot trifle with two gentlemen, till I ascertain the intentions of one of them. Do not ask me to do so, I beseech you, for it goes against every feeling of my heart.” Christobelle burst into tears.

“ I detest such stupid folly ! Pray, don’t imagine that your frowns will destroy the peace of either gentlemen. Men do not now suffer more than an hour’s annoyance ; a new flame soon lights the expiring embers of an old *penchant*.”

“ I am very glad to hear it, mamma.”

“ I only counsel you to mete out your attentions to each gentleman alike, Bell, and to distinguish neither at present. I imagine nothing

unholy in a line of conduct which preserves a proper and just decorum in your manners."

"I will do any thing you please, mamma; only do not ask me to trifle with Sir John Spotiswoode."

"You will do every thing which pleases yourself, and nothing which pleases me. I perfectly understand your meaning; but allow me also to observe, that I will hold no intercourse with a daughter who presumes to lecture her parent. I will have no communication with a young woman who insolently defies her mother, and insists upon acting according to her own weak judgment."

"Do not suppose me defying you, mamma. There is nothing I would not do to give you pleasure — nothing I would not do to increase your comforts; only I beseech you not to compel me into a conduct my heart disowns as ungenerous and wicked."

"Of course, a parent is wrong — of course, a mother is not a proper judge, compared with a child's greater wisdom, in any affair connected with that child's welfare. I am aware of your high opinion of yourself. I have long known your freedom, from every proper feeling which softens and decorates a woman's mind. Remain

single, Bell, and be the prototype of your great aunt, Miss Christobelle Wetheral; sink like her into insignificant old maidism. But don't let my eyes contemplate you, an excrescence in your family — an incubus upon its glory. All my daughters have married splendidly, and I cannot be encumbered by a stupid daughter, who throws every advantage from her, and considers an admirer an unholy appendage.”

Tears flowed silently down her daughter's cheeks. Christobelle could hold no dialogue with a mother, whose ironical manner and determinedly opposed views distressed her, and darkened the prospect of her life. Her silence became a matter of offence.

“If weeping is to accompany your talent for continual and insolent opposition, Miss Wetheral, I will request you to leave me: my own nerves are sufficiently shattered.”

Christobelle rose, and quitted the room; Sir John Spottiswoode came towards her from the hall, as she closed the door of the breakfast-room. He did not notice her emotion; he did not even speak, but he gently drew her arm within his own, and led her upon the terrace which commanded the view of the lake. They took one turn in silence, and then Sir John Spot-

tiswoode spoke of his admiration of Lochleven, and gradually drew Christobelle into cheerful conversation. He asked her opinion concerning the morning's plan of amusement. "If she did not prefer riding, he should feel inclined to consider the day just the very thing for a water excursion." Christobelle was very willing to resign herself into Sir John's hands. The conversation of the morning had damped the glow of pleasure, and given a melancholy tinge to her thoughts, which could not be immediately shaken off. She therefore answered slowly—"Yes, any thing; let us go upon the water, if you wish it."

Sir John Spottiswoode pressed her arm to his side so slightly, that she could scarcely write it down a pressure, as he replied :

"I will have nothing done without your full concurrence. If you do not feel inclined to go on the water, let the original plan be adopted."

"I believe my tones are rather dismal this morning," she replied, with more cheerfulness; "but I quite approve of your idea. We will certainly row to the Douglas Isle."

Sir John Wetheral accompanied them in their little excursion; and as they glided towards the Isle, the fresh air, the light dip of the oars, and the conversation of her two companions, re-

stored Christobelle's spirit to its usual buoyancy. Sir John Spottiswoode watched the ebb and flow of her countenance, and bent towards her. "This is perfect enchantment. Tell me now why you were so melancholy."

Christobelle shook her head smilingly. "Do not put me in mind of it, but sing me a Swiss air; that air I loved to hear at Wetheral."

"You have remembered it, even among these distant scenes?"

"It has never faded from my recollection. On the contrary, these rocks and mountains brought it still more freshly to memory."

Sir John Spottiswoode instantly sang the Swiss air with spirit, and his voice sounded melodiously on the water, which lay so calmly, so beautifully still: not a breath of air curled a ripple upon its surface. Again and again the song recommenced, and all Christobelle's troubles were forgotten in the delicious harmony. She did not know she sat gazing upon the singer, till Sir John Spottiswoode suddenly paused, and their eyes met: Christobelle was not aware her attention was so exclusively bestowed upon him, till the expression of his glance recalled her thoughts. She turned from him in confusion, and fixed her contemplation

upon the mountains which rose gradually above each other, till their heads were lost in clouds. She looked no more towards Sir John Spottiswoode.

The little party sat conversing some hours on a small pile of stones raised under a tree, which, in former days, constituted the *plaisance* of Lochleven Castle. This spot commanded the rich plain of Kinross, the rocky hills which swelled on either side, and the houses which dotted the plain, and gleamed in the sunshine. They thought of the sufferings of Mary, when she inhabited the now-ruined building under which they reposed, not as a restless Queen of Scots, but as a captive woman, banished to an isle where her eye could only rest upon rocks and water, far from her home and friends.

Sir John Spottiswoode also told of foreign scenes, and compared the beauties of Lochleven with the gigantic lakes of the south. They could not bear comparison; yet Lochleven possessed, in its diminutiveness, every requisite for poetic beauty. It was Lochleven; and Lochleven contained a succession of captivating scenery, delighting to the eye and mind. Many might prefer the imposing immensity of Geneva, of Constance, or of Zurich; but all must admire

Lochleven. He did not see the chamois bounding from cliff to cliff; but the mind loved to repose on the bold yet tranquil scene which he contemplated. He did not dread the avalanche; but the softer landscape pleased an eye, sated with precipices, glaziers, torrents, and cataracts. It was delightful to sit by the side of friends, in the midst of scenery so beautiful, and yet be able to say, "It is in our own land."

Christobelle listened, and forgot Lord Farnborough. Far more attractive to her mind was the manly conversation of Sir John Spottiswoode, than the empty compliments of a new acquaintance. How could she, for an instant, feel disappointment at the thought of being absent from Fairlee when his lordship called?

Their return to the main land was late; it was later still when they reached Fairlee. They had lingered by the way, and every turn presented new objects to admire, and fresh subjects for discussion. The half-hour bell was pealing its tones, and the echo reverberated from rock to rock, as they gained the terrace. This incident produced another pause: Sir John described the effect of the echo among the mountains of Switzerland, and the wild cry of the Switzers. Christobelle had scarcely time

to hurry into her room, and change her dress, before they were summoned into the dining-room. Lady Wetheral did not address her daughter during dinner. She directed her discourse exclusively to her husband, when any subject was intended particularly to attract Christobelle's attention; otherwise, her manners were captivating as ever, when she played the hospitable and agreeable hostess, at the head of her table.

“My dear John, the Duke of Forfar called this morning.” Christobelle's colour rose, and her quick eye detected the little emotion. “I was gratified by the call: his Grace looked remarkably well, and Lady Anna Herbert as sprightly as usual. Four years have rolled by, and left their ‘flowing hair’ unthinned. Lady Anna looks quite as youthful as she did when a ‘*belle confessed*,’ at your mother's balls, Sir John Spottiswoode.”

“She was a very fine girl, and an excellent flirt,” remarked Sir John. “Charles and Lady Anna were great friends some years ago.”

“I was very much pleased with Lord Farnborough,” continued Lady Wetheral, addressing her husband, and passing her eyes slightly over Christobelle. “Lord Farnborough accompanied

his party, and I have not seen such a finished gentleman many years."

Sir John Spottiswoode made no remark ; and Christobelle was silent. Sir John Wetheral asked if the great boy had grown into a fine-looking youth ?

"I set Lord Farnborough down as decidedly handsome at the first glance, my love ; but I forgot his beauty in his very finished manners."

Sir John made no further remark, and there was a short pause, till Lady Wetheral resumed—

"Lord Farnborough spoke with polite pleasure of his introduction to my daughter yesterday ; and he brought a note from Miss Ponsonby, requesting us to join a party next Tuesday to St. Mungo's Isle. You were included, Sir John, when our friends learned you were at Fairlee."

Sir John Spottiswoode bowed.

"It is to be an early party, and there were sundry messages delivered which my poor head could not contain ; but Lord Farnborough will call again with more ample instructions. I told him it was cruel to load my memory with such matter."

"Do the Forfar party continue long at Clan-

moray," said Sir John Spottiswoode, some moments after the subject had dropped.

"I believe so," was Lady Wetheral's reply; "indeed, Lord Farnborough mentioned his own protracted stay, when the rest left for Farnborough Stacy. I forget when *they* depart."

"Perhaps there is attractive metal in Miss Fanny Ponsonby," observed Sir John Wetheral.

"There is attraction somewhere," replied his lady, "for there was a lover's touch in his description of Lochleven, and in his anxiety for the party to St. Mungo's Isle."

"Allow me the pleasure of taking wine with you, Miss Wetheral," said Sir John Spottiswoode, bending forward. The subject again dropped.

The half hour's interregnum after dinner, was passed in lectures on Lady Wetheral's part. The ladies had scarcely entered the drawing-room, when Christobelle's attention was again required upon the subject so painfully argued in the morning.

"I wish to try your narrow capacity once more, Bell, and to ascertain whether you really possess one spark of that wholesome ambition which dignifies a woman of birth."

"Indeed, mamma, I hope so. I would not

for worlds stoop to commit a mean action, or indulge a mean thought. My very greatest ambition is to act like a lady, and, by so doing, meet every one's respect."

"That is all very well, Bell, but that is not exactly my meaning. To be respectable, you must soar. It is vain to content one's-self with grovelling just above the heads of the canaille. The proper ambition is to grasp at high things, and possess them."

"I have no wish for high things, mamma."

"Because your nature is common-place, Bell, because your mind is low set. However you may pique yourself upon your accomplished education, that very education has crippled my hopes, and your own prospects. You will live and die, satisfied with mediocrity."

"But, mamma, what do you mean, and what am I to do to give you satisfaction? I cannot understand you."

"I will explain myself. Bell Are you a girl of such a mean spirit, as to accept a baronet, when a duke's son enters the list of suitors? Answer me—are you so mean-spirited, so mediocre in your wishes, as to content yourself with a man who cannot raise you above your fellows?"

“Certainly not, mamma, if I did not love him.”

“Love him ! Could you love a man—would you dare to plead attachment to a man, as an excuse for lowering yourself in marriage below your sisters’ fortunes ? Would *you* meanly creep, while *their* flight has carried them to this world’s pinnacle ? I hope, I trust, you would not do so, Bell !”

“Whom can you allude to ?” exclaimed Christobelle, distressed beyond measure at her mother’s words ; “tell me at once, I beseech you, what you mean. Do not speak to me in parables.”

Lady Wetheral became extremely agitated. She walked to the window, threw open the sash, and closed it again, as she spoke.

“I have said enough to waken your understanding. Any one might comprehend my meaning—any one would know I detested the idea of your marrying Sir John Spottiswoode.”

Christobelle looked up in her mother’s face with astonishment. She continued with increased nervousness.

“You cannot deceive *me*, Bell. You cannot deny your predilection for that man, which will at once decide the intentions, and end all hopes

of Lord Farnborough. You are determined to pursue your will, and I will act upon my own resolution. The very hour in which you accept Sir John Spottiswoode, shall be the last of your residence with me."

"Good heavens, mamma, I have not a thought of Sir John Spottiswoode, or Sir John Spottiswoode of me! What can have caused such a supposition in your mind?"

"You do not care for him—you *will* not care for him—is that your meaning, Bell?"

"I do not care for any one, half so much as for my own papa, and I hope I shall always prefer him," she exclaimed, energetically.

"Folly, and nonsense!—girl's folly," resumed Lady Wetheral, "by your blushes I might have given you credit for ambition; but your walks and sailing with Sir John Spottiswoode, inclines me to fear you will give yourself to a poor baronet."

"I did not know he was poor, mamma."

"Comparatively speaking with Sir Foster Kerrison, he *is* poor. What is a paltry income of three thousand pounds, compared with the wealthy dukedom of Forfar?"

"Am I to marry the Duke of Forfar?" ex-

claimed Christobelle, starting from her chair in horror.

“Not the present duke, Bell, though he is a remarkably fine man, and not more than sixty years of age. Many young ladies might approve the Duke of Forfar; but I allude to his very handsome, very accomplished mannered son.”

Christobelle could have listened to her mother's eulogium with infinite pleasure at an earlier period, and before she had deprecated Sir John Spottiswoode. But her soul rose against persecution. She could not endure to hear her friend lowered, or to be at once commanded not to like a man whom she loved in innocence, and without a thought of future connexion. From that moment, Sir John Spottiswoode became a martyr in her eyes, and Lord Farnborough sank into a secondary personage. Lady Wetheral awaited her daughter's reply some moments, but her mind was too busily employed deciding her feelings.

“You are very thoughtful, Bell. Think well upon my words, and act with becoming spirit.”

“I have thought, and I have decided,” replied Christobelle, firmly.

“But do not look so ashy pale, my dear Bell; these little struggles are trifles, compared with a long existence of nonentity. I gave up a very

powerful attachment, to please my wise and reflecting mother. I relinquished Captain Blennerhasset for your father, and I found her remarks perfectly just, by the course of events. She implored me to forbear marrying an Irish officer, with little more than his pay, when a prospect arose before me of becoming mistress of Wetheral Castle. She assured my romantic fancy, that Love could not survive the attacks of poverty, and she warned me to avoid the miseries of following my husband into disagreeable quarters, where I must sink into a captain's lady, a title of far less importance than the general's mistress. I followed my dear mother's prudent advice, and broke off my engagement with Blennerhasset."

Christobelle was interested in the fate of her mother's unfortunate lover, and she asked what had become of Captain Blennerhasset?

"He married somebody of distinction," she replied, "and fell at Badajos. His widow and four children are now living upon the bounty of their friends. My mother's counsel was wise, and I was fortunately prevailed upon to act with propriety."

"Poor Captain Blennerhasset!"

"Poverty is always pitiable," resumed Lady

Wetheral. "I consider people equally poor, whose income will not allow them to compete with their neighbours. I should say poor Lady Spottiswoode, if you were the wife of our excellent guest,"

"Alverton is a handsome estate," remarked Christobelle.

"Very well for a nobody," replied Lady Wetheral, haughtily, "but a wretched pittance for a Miss Wetheral, who has attracted the notice of Lord Farnborough. I saw his watchful looks towards the door, Bell. I marked his lordship's glances towards the lake, when he heard of your visit to the island; every thing is in your power, if you will but listen to your mother's counsel."

"Do not talk to me of marriage, mamma, I implore you," cried Christobelle, as the gentlemen entered from the dining-room. Sir John Spottiswoode took his seat near her as usual; she thought he looked more benevolent, more interesting than ever. Matrimony never coupled itself with her admiration of Sir John, but to be commanded to approve him less than Lord Farnborough—to consider *him* poor and undesirable, who had improved her better tastes, and increased her store of good! No, that should

never be. Christobelle was too young to wish to marry, too happy and free to think of fetters : but her right hand would forget its cunning, ere she ceased to esteem Sir John Spottiswoode beyond every human being.

“Shall we walk this evening?” he asked, as thoughts passed too rapidly through her mind to allow of speech. Christobelle coloured, and turned mechanically towards her mother. Lady Wetheral saw her emotion.

“My dear child looks fatigued, Sir John. Shall we advise her to be quiet this evening? A long morning upon the water has lessened her bloom.”

“One little turn upon the terrace only, Miss Wetheral.” Sir John offered his arm.

“My dear Bell, even the terrace will fatigue you,” observed her ladyship, with anxiety.

“One turn to watch that sunset, Lady Wetheral ! I will bring Miss Wetheral back before fatigue attacks her.”

“My dear Bell !.....”

“I will not detain her many minutes — *one* turn, my pupil.”

Christobelle could not resist that title. She rose, and accompanied Sir John Spottiswoode upon the terrace. One turn was taken, and they

paused to watch the golden beams sink behind the mountains. Another and another was agreed upon, just to watch the pale gleams departing. Was it, indeed, her mother's prohibition which gave so much interest to her companion's remarks? Was it her prohibition which threw a charm over his conversation, and caused Christobelle to linger in his society? She knew not — but it was dark when they returned into the drawing-room, and the coffee had been forgotten. Lady Wetheral's eyes turned upon her daughter with an offended expression, but Christobelle forgot their glance in pleasing retrospections that night. Christobelle dreamed of Sir John Spottiswoode, and their early first days of acquaintance, when Lady Wetheral approved and sought his intimacy, and she had enjoyed it undisturbed, without a reference to Lord Farnborough.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Lady Wetheral complained the following morning of her nerves. She assured Sir John Spottiswoode her alarms about her daughter's health induced the attacks, and she hoped Christobelle would not think of quitting Fairlee grounds that day. When that dear girl was long absent, her fears became overpowering, and a frequent recurrence of such disquietude might bring on a serious illness. She hoped Bell would find amusement in the house, and be prevailed upon to forego her long walks. Sir John Spottiswoode should not suffer by her nervous feelings. She was aware her husband admired and sought out points of scenery almost as enthusiastically as Bell, and he would be delighted to attend him in his rides.

Sir John Spottiswoode smiled. "I will also decline leaving the house, if you please. Since

my pupil has suffered by my selfish pleasures, I will dedicate myself to her entertainment—we will sketch the lake from the terrace.”

“That would be most pleasant; but I fear my poor nerves are in the way again, my dear Sir John. I do not like to see my daughter bending over her drawing.”

“Miss Wetheral shall not bend over her drawing: I will read to you both; I will read the ‘Lady of the Lake.’”

“That will be most agreeable—most entertaining,” observed her ladyship. “My dear Bell, you are so partial to Sir Walter Scott’s poems!”

Yes, Christobelle was a warm admirer of Sir Walter’s poetry; but she thought still more of the pleasure she should experience in hearing it read aloud by Sir John Spottiswoode. Christobelle acknowledged “how gratified she would feel, by hearing the ‘Lady of the Lake’—that she preferred ‘*la lecture*’ even to a sketch of the bright Lochleven. She would bring her netting, and her father should sit by her in his comfortable chair.”

Every thing was arranged, shortly after the conclusion of breakfast, for the reading; but, ere the gentlemen returned from their morning visit

to the stables and gardens, Lady Wetheral expressed her satisfaction at the arrangement.

“I have managed to withdraw you from a walk, Bell. I dislike those walks. Your name would soon become coupled with Sir John Spottiswoode, which I will not allow. If Lord Farnborough calls to-day, every thing is in its proper order. Place a chair for the reader, between your father and myself, my love : our ears are older than your youthful members.”

“I thought the Clanmoray party called yesterday, mamma?”

“They did so—and yet I have a presentiment that Lord Farnborough will appear again to-day. Remember, Bell, I do not extend my prohibition to Lord Farnborough. You may walk with Lord Farnborough.”

“That would give offence to Sir John Spottiswoode, mamma.”

“Leave *me* to manage Sir John Spottiswoode, my love.”

“I shall not wish to walk ; I shall remain at home to-day, if you please, mamma.”

“I do not prescribe your hours, my dear Bell. Walk when and where you like, so you are not conspicuous with Sir John Spottiswoode. I warn you in time, that I will listen to no proposal

which does not emanate from Lord Farnborough ; and no plea from yourself, which has reference to our present guest. You are warned in time, remember !”

“ I should never think of, or hope to attach, Sir John Spottiswoode,” Christobelle replied, calmly ; “ I only wish to be allowed free liberty to enjoy his conversation.”

“ There is a very homely adage, Bell, which says, ‘ Prevention is better than a cure.’ Lay its meaning to your heart.”

Christobelle did not continue the dialogue. She gave her whole attention to her netting, till the gentlemen returned, and till Sir John Spottiswoode commenced his reading : her whole soul was then engrossed in the fate of the fair and gentle Ellen. Gradually her hands relaxed their grasp, as the story proceeded—gradually her eyes turned upon the reader, and her netting fell disregarded upon the carpet. She was listening to the scene where Malcolm hears the praises of Ellen from the lips of Douglas :

“ If a father’s partial thought
O’erweighed her worth and beauty aught—
Well might the lover’s judgment fail
To balance with a juster scale ;
For with each secret glance he stole,
The fond enthusiast sent his soul.”

The eyes of Sir John Spottiswoode rested upon Christobelle as he spoke these lines, and she felt a pain at her heart before unknown, and now indescribable. Lady Wetheral caught the mutual expression, and was struck by the sudden paleness of her daughter's countenance. She turned to Sir John Spottiswoode.

“ You will smile at a lady's nerves, and decide us to be incomprehensible beings ; but the continual flow of your voice vibrates upon my nerves in a peculiar manner. I *must* feel unwell, since a voice like your own creates nervousness. I will retire, for a short period, to appeal once more to camphor-julep. My dear Bell will give me her arm.”

Sir John Spottiswoode rose in alarm.

“ My dear sir, these trifling attacks are becoming less and less frequent. My daughter and myself will leave you and Sir John together. I trust these attacks are not to be often repeated ; but we shall meet at luncheon, I hope, quite recovered.”

The mother and daughter quitted the sitting-room ; but, as they passed through the door, held open by Sir John Spottiswoode, he took Christobelle's hand, and kindly hoped she would not be too ill to enjoy a breeze upon the terrace.

“ Oh ! yes, this evening I shall truly enjoy the pure air,” she replied, withdrawing her hand as they passed on.

“ If there is any thing most displeasing to me,” observed Lady Wetheral, as they entered her dressing-room, “ it is comprised in that familiar action of shaking hands upon every occasion. I beg you will avoid it in future.”

“ It was merely to express a kind wish, *en passant*,” Christobelle remarked, “ that Sir John Spottiswoode just touched my hand.”

“ Familiarity which begins *en passant*, ends in contempt *pour toujours*, Miss Wetheral.”

“ Would you wish to lie down, mamma, or shall I ring for Mrs. Bevan ?” asked her daughter, willing to change the subject.

“ Neither, Miss Wetheral. I wish simply to remain here, and, if you please, you shall read to me.”

Christobelle continued reading to her mother, who sat reclining in a lounging-chair, till a tap at the door announced Mrs. Bevan in waiting. Her ladyship touched a little silver hand-bell by her side, to indicate to Mrs. Bevan that she might enter. She brought a summons from her master, to beg the ladies would make their appearance.

“Tell Frederick, Mrs. Bevan, to inform your master we will descend when the luncheon is announced: I am very nervous and unwell.”

“My lady, I believe my Lord Farnborough is in the drawing-room.”

“Oh! very well, Mrs. Bevan, we are coming immediately.” Mrs. Bevan vanished. “My dear love, just draw out your beautiful curls; and if you could pass a narrow blue ribbon negligently through your hair, it would give great effect to its jetty abundance. A little more animation in your manner, Bell, and a little less paleness, is to be desired. Yes, that blush has had great effect—now let us proceed, ere it vanishes.”

They entered the drawing-room, and Christobelle's eyes first sought Sir John Spottiswoode. He was standing at the window, but he turned towards the ladies, as the little bustle of their entrance reached his ear, and advanced with alacrity. Lady Wetheral held out her hand. “I am much better, my dear Sir John—your countenance asks the question. I have had repose—perfect repose—and I am better. My daughter is my medicine.” Her ladyship still held Christobelle's arm, and moved gracefully forward. “My lord, you are the bearer of Miss Pon-

sonby's wishes. My poor memory had parted with the recollection of your message yesterday, before my daughter's return."

Christobelle bowed to Lord Farnborough, and would have apologized for her absence the preceding day, by stating Sir John Spottiswoode's arrival, had not the attention of the latter been fixed upon her. She could perceive that he watched her narrowly, and that knowledge imparted an awkwardness to her manner which she could not shake off. Christobelle stopped abruptly in her speech, and hesitated. Lord Farnborough had greatly the advantage in perfect ease of manner. Christobelle felt her insufficiency, and it caused greater agitation — for what would Sir John Spottiswoode think of her folly?"

Lord Farnborough entered gaily into conversation, and he did not allude to his disappointment, or recur to the events which had passed. He was charged with Miss Ponsonby's complimentary fears lest Christobelle should become a defaulter to St. Mungo's Isle, and her hopes that the party would assemble at Clanmoray, before the aquatic expedition took place. It was hoped that Lady Wetheral would accompany the Fairlee party, and forget her fears of the water.

“You will be under my guidance, Lady Wetheral,” continued Lord Farnborough, “and I am an experienced sailor. Ponsonby heads a detachment also, but I particularly request your daughter and yourself will place yourselves under *my* care.”

“We will certainly enlist under your banners, Lord Farnborough; we prefer the sailor to the soldier, upon the water,” said Lady Wetheral, her countenance lighted up with pleasure, and all her ailments forgotten. “I shall accept, with pleasure, Miss Ponsonby’s invitation, and I will *try* to forget my fears.”

“I shall ride over on Tuesday, to escort you,” resumed Lord Farnborough. “Since you consider yourselves my peculiar care, I shall certainly take charge of you from your own door. Miss Ponsonby declares, if I monopolize the ladies, she will insist upon being attended by the gentlemen. She therefore appropriates Sir John Wetheral and your guest.”

“A charmingly novel arrangement,” exclaimed Lady Wetheral, delighted to believe that Sir John Spottiswoode would not enter her appointed vessel. “I am amused by the peculiar novelty. Tell me who form your exclusive party?”

“Oh! I have secured Lady Anna and Fanny Ponsonby—Mrs. Ponsonby has declared off altogether—the Greys, and the two Quintens.”

“The handsome Quintens?”

“Yes, the handsome, tall Quintens—second only to the incomparable Fanny Ponsonby.”

Christobelle thought Lord Farnborough handsome—very handsome, that morning. If Sir John Spottiswoode had not arrived at Fairlee—if Lady Wetheral had not tortured her heart, by *compelling* its obedience—by endeavouring to lower her opinion of the friend she esteemed—if, a thousand ifs—Christobelle had perhaps admired his lordship, and fallen a victim to her mother’s wishes. But, now!—a thousand Lord Farnboroughs could not fill up the sum of her preference to the society of Sir John Spottiswoode. Love was a deity unknown, unwished for. She only prayed to pass her existence with her father, and to see sometimes the friend she so greatly venerated.

Lord Farnborough remained some hours at Fairlee; and when Christobelle’s confusion, which arose at Sir John Spottiswoode’s scrutiny, had subsided, she could also join in the passing conversation. Many complimentary nothings fell from Lord Farnborough’s lips, to which she re-

plied with a banter which arose from the collision of their wits—not from a heart gratified by empty verbiage. Christobelle was at rest from reproach; and her spirits rose from their contact with lively observations and sprightly repartee.

Sir John Spottiswoode did not join in the wordy war, but her father smiled in pleased approbation, and often rescued his daughter from the horns of a dilemma. Lady Wetheral's satisfaction lay deep in her heart, but she sat composedly silent, as the brilliant scintillations of wit played round her. It was after the departure of Lord Farnborough, that she spoke her feelings in one concise, but too dangerous, sentence.

“Bell, walk *now* when and where you please, with Sir John Spottiswoode.”

Christobelle was again at liberty to walk by the side of her friend—again free to claim his society, without reproachful looks and unkind expressions! How joyfully did she avail herself of the blessed privilege! Her mother smiled at their repeated absence, and expressed no curiosity to learn their subjects of conversation. Christobelle drew fearlessly to the side of Sir John Spottiswoode, or leaned upon his arm with confidence, as they watched the sun's

decline from the terrace. She was the happiest creature breathing, till the day of their engagement to Clanmoray.

And yet Christobelle fancied there were symptoms of reserve on the part of her companion. Conversation became, she thought, less gaily free, less continuous. There were repeated and long pauses, which she could not break, and Sir John Spottiswoode appeared to covet. They sat one morning in their rocky seat, without exchanging a single word, till Sir John suddenly exclaimed,—

“This is, indeed, perfect happiness.”

Christobelle smiled.

“We are *silent* adorers of Nature; but our feelings are not the less sincere.”

“Powerful admiration is in the heart, not upon the lips,” replied her companion, sighing.

“Yet we admired the scene as fervently when we chatted and sang upon the lake,” observed Christobelle.

“That was eye-service, Miss Wetheral. The glorious scenery *then* delighted my eye, but had not reached my heart: its effects now are very soothing, yet melancholy.”

“Don’t let me interrupt your meditations, then,” Christobelle replied, with a little feeling

of offended pride, which had never risen in her bosom till that moment. She was ashamed of its existence, but it *would* display itself.

“I have not the sprightly and winning tongue of Lord Farnborough, Miss Wetheral. I cannot be witty and yet feel deeply.”

“Lord Farnborough,” replied Christobelle, colouring, “was not in my thoughts.”

“I spoke unadvisedly, my dear pupil : forgive the stern schoolmaster.”

Sir John Spottiswoode held out his hand, and when did Christobelle resist that affectionate title, which recalled his instructions, and their happy days at Wetheral? She gave her own hand with the delight of heart which every one experiences who renews a happy intercourse with half displeased friends. Sir John Spottiswoode held it for some moments ; and when it was withdrawn gently from his grasp, they again relapsed into silence. The dressing-bell startled them from their long reverie.

“Oh, that tiresome bell !” exclaimed Christobelle, “how dismally and faithfully it summons one from mental enjoyment to the creature comforts !”

“It is wisely ordered !” replied Sir John Spottiswoode, placing her arm within his own.

“ I will tell you why I judge it so, as we climb this steep. We enjoy all things by comparison, and in their variety. Mental pleasures depend upon calm bodily tranquillity; and where the constitution suffers, there is little leisure for the mind to absorb itself in its own reveries. There! you have slipped, and hurt your foot!”

“ But the dressing-bell — you have not yet illustrated your position!” exclaimed Christobelle, in some confusion, as her companion caught her fall, by throwing his arm round her waist, though it was instantly withdrawn.

“ I was going to enter upon it as you fell, my argumentative pupil. A calm mind depends upon bodily repose, which demands support, which is effected by food, which is denoted by the dressing-bell to be preparing. Have I not stated it truly and concisely.”

“ Yes; a perfect ‘ House that Jack built,’ in its tripping measure. You will rival Lord Farnborough.”

“ What is the meaning of this extraordinary arrangement, that all the ladies are to sail in one vessel, Miss Wetheral?”

“ Miss Ponsonby’s whim, I believe. I look forward with pleasure to our party to-morrow.”

“ Do you?”

“Yes: I feel light as the heather-bell, and quite ready to aim poisoned arrows at Lord Farnborough. Will it amuse you?”

“Not particularly.”

“You do not like Lord Farnborough?”

“I have no reason to feel entertainment in his lordship’s society. I am not an admirer of his conversation.”

Christobelle thought Sir John Spottiswoode spoke a little bitterly of poor Lord Farnborough, but it did not surprise her. Doubtless, Mr. Beverly’s supposed injury had taken effect upon his friend’s mind, and prejudiced him against his lordship. Christobelle did not, however, continue a subject in itself uninteresting. Lord Farnborough had no charm for her; she only felt amused by his sprightly powers. While her father and Sir John Spottiswoode were near, Christobelle’s spirits ever rose into gaiety: she would be gaiety itself during the water excursion, and Sir John would be gay too, only he spoke so deprecatingly of the affair. They did not linger on the terrace. Christobelle had only time to promise her companion that the evening should be devoted to music, and she hurried to her room. The second bell sounded ere she could reach the drawing-room.

The following morning rose in sunny smiles. A mist had cleared away, leaving the sparkling waters of the lake bright and clear ; and Christobelle's spirits were unusually high at the prospect of her happy day of pleasurable anticipation. She spoke in metaphor, and thought in rhyme ; but her astonishment was great, in beholding the coolness of Sir John Spottiswoode's manner, and viewing the gravity of his countenance at breakfast. Christobelle's most lively sallies passed perfectly unnoticed and unheeded. She could not win one smile, or obtain one remark from her friend. His eye appeared heavy, and Christobelle fancied he must suffer from concealed illness, otherwise he would have caught the infection of her spirits. The thought of Sir John Spottiswoode suffering sobered her vivacity. She became grave, and gradually even sad, to witness his dejection. Christobelle approached him when they rose from the breakfast-table ; her mother had quitted the breakfast-room, and she feared no misconstruction of her anxiety.

“I know you are ill. I am sure you are unfit to join a party full of mirth.”

“I believe I am unequal to this morning's

gaiety ; certainly quite unfitted for mirth," was the dejected answer.

"How very annoying that it should take place to-day ; or how provoking that you should ever be ill ! Did you rise unwell ?"

"No ; I was perfectly well when I entered the breakfast-room ; but a few turns on the terrace with Lady Wetheral, before you appeared, has caused a head and heart ache. I cannot remain at Fairlee solitary, but I am too ill to mix in a party of pleasure."

"I wish we were both going in our own boat, to our own island, to be quiet," Christobelle exclaimed. "I do not enjoy large parties when my friends are ill."

"You will not observe my sickness of heart, Miss Wetheral. You will be gaily engaged."

"Not if you are ill."

Christobelle was not aware of the compliment conveyed in her observation. She spoke from her heart simply and sincerely, without considering its flattering tendency. Sir John Spottiswoode caught her hand, and released it again suddenly. He turned abruptly away.

"Do not speak so recklessly, so heartlessly, I beseech you !"

“I never was suspected of heartlessness, Sir John Spottiswoode!”

Christobelle also turned away, for proud tears rose at the unexpected attack. She was quitting the room.

“Stay one moment, and say you forgive me,” he cried with energy. “Forgive me, Miss Wetheral—forgive me, my generous pupil!”

Christobelle turned at the last expression, and her emotion was apparent, for he caught her in his arms.

“I cannot support this sight! What right had I to presume to give pain! What right had I to breathe a harsh expression towards a creature all heart, and all nobleness!”

“I am not angry,” she replied, withdrawing from his embrace—“I am not angry, Sir John Spottiswoode; only I do not deserve the appellation of heartless. I spoke in sincerity and truth.”

“I know you did. I was wrong to speak as I did—forgive me!”

“I do forgive you,” she answered, smiling, and another long pressure of the hand attested their reconciliation.

“Calm a penitent spirit by a stroll on the terrace, and talk to me, that I may forget my

fault and its cause. Let me hear your voice again, and let me hear it till Lord Farnborough arrives."

The friends walked nearly an hour together. Christobelle's spirits were again elevated, and she chatted with renewed vivacity. Sir John Spottiswoode walked smilingly by her side, listening to her anticipations of his illness dispersing in the fresh air of Lochleven; but he was not himself. He replied to her remarks, and lent his powers in playful conversation; but they were not *given*. He often sighed, and repeatedly compelled his companion to bespeak his attention.

"You tell me to chat, and your mind is far away," she said, at last, weary with receiving no reply.

"But I have not lost a word. I hear you with the most vivid attention, because you will not long honour me."

"Why so, I pray you, gentle coz?"

"You will be engrossed by Lord Farnborough!"

"That, then, will be your own fault!"

He looked earnestly in Christobelle's face, and shook his head.

"Say it once more, my pupil."

"It will be your own fault, if *any one* engrosses my attention. Why should I be inattentive to my naughty schoolmaster?"

Lord Farnborough bounded from the drawing-room window upon the terrace, and advanced towards them. Christobelle felt her companion's arm relax; she looked reproachingly towards him.

"You wish already to get rid of your poor pupil?"

"Never, never!" was the subdued reply; but Lord Farnborough stood before them.

"You are ready, I see. Is not this a glorious day? Clanmoray is in a proper bustle, and the lake never looked so beautiful. Miss Ponsonby declares she will be the 'Lady of the Lake,' and dress in costume as you do, Miss Wetheral. She hopes some 'Malcolm' of Lochleven will start forth and woo her, but she rather despairs of such good fortune. Malcolm will be attracted elsewhere."

A low bow from his lordship pointed the compliment, and Christobelle curtsied to its meaning. Sir John Spottiswoode would not enter into the unmeaning dialogue which succeeded: he pertinaciously avoided even lending a smile to Lord Farnborough. How deeply he resented, in Christobelle's eyes, the offence offered to his friend Beverly!

It was a beautiful drive to Clanmoray. Lady Wetheral, forgetful of her long confinement—her nervous feelings—and the painful remembrance of Clara's death, chatted through the carriage-window with Lord Farnborough, as gaily and as sportively as ever. Christobelle amused herself with rallying Sir John Spottiswoode upon his illness, which she assured him was affected, to try the sympathy of his friends. He rebutted the idea with excellent good humour, and they entered the grounds of General Ponsonby in most merry mood.

Two or three groupes were seated in picturesque attitudes, listening to Captain Ponsonby, who struck a guitar with great spirit, and amused the company with Spanish Boleros and Moorish songs. The Wetherals' arrival was the signal to embark; and, in the confusion of introductions, reception, compliments, decisions upon the fit and unfit, and Miss Ponsonby's determination to be the Lady of the Lake, Christobelle found herself descending the wooded hill which sloped to the waters' edge, escorted by Lord Farnborough and Mr. Ponsonby. Lady Wetheral followed closely upon her daughter's steps, leaning upon the arm of the Duke of Forfar. Christobelle cast lingering looks at the

groupe which dotted the pathway, but she could not distinguish the figure of Sir John Spottiswoode.

“Well, we look neat, however,” said Mr. Ponsonby, cracking a whip, which never departed from his right hand.

“Is my father near, Mr. Ponsonby?” Christobelle asked, anxiously. She was sure Sir John Spottiswoode would be near *him*, and her heart wished to ascertain his movements. She dared not appear interested in the whereabouts of her “tutor,” to attract notice. Mr. Ponsonby cracked his whip, and looked behind him.

“Sir John Wetheral and your friend are escorting my sisters. Do observe the pretty effect of the groupe descending the glen.”

They turned to admire the picturesque figures which adorned the woody scene. Lady Wetheral also lingered with his Grace of Forfar, to gaze upon their effect.

“These scenes are not to be found in Shropshire,” observed his Grace. “The Wrekin lying upon the plain, like a whale in a dish, will be tame work when we can remember Lochleven.”

“And yet I sometimes sigh for the scenes I have quitted,” said her ladyship. “I confess I love the busy hum of man, and Lochleven is

dreary in the winter months. I wish I could persuade my daughter she is dull at Fairlee."

"Miss Wetheral loves the grand seclusion of Lochleven, because her taste has not been vitiated by society."

"My daughter is wedded to calm life, and loves no agitation beyond the ruffled lake. I believe her spirit would pine in the gay world."

"So much the better, my good lady; her young mind is uncontaminated by the arts of a worldly life."

"My endeavour is to preserve its purity, and watch over its happiness," replied her ladyship, sighing.

At this moment the whole party became united again. Sir John Spottiswoode quitted Miss Fanny Ponsonby, and approached Christobelle. Lady Wetheral perceived the movement, and she turned hastily round.

"My dear child, you are tired, you look pale. My lord, you have outwalked even your 'genius of the Lake.'"

Lord Farnborough offered his arm, with many polite regrets. Christobelle declined it, courteously. She was quite equal to the walk;—she felt no fatigues.

"Oblige me, my dear child," said Lady We-

theral, anxiously ; “ I cannot be satisfied unless you accept his lordship’s assistance. My dear girl, make me happy.”

Christobelle could hesitate no longer. All eyes were upon her ; she was actually in the way, and a remark from his Grace confused her.

“ My dear young lady, you stand there, turning all the young men’s heads. Harry, take away your prize, for we are at fault till you proceed.”

Christobelle was led away, accordingly ; and she saw no more of Sir John Spottiswoode, till they gained the shore of the lake. He was walking still with Miss Fanny Ponsonby, when she beheld him again. He was apparently explaining something to her comprehension, for she was leaning upon his arm, and he was pointing to the peak of Cona. Was he quoting Ossian to the beautiful Fanny Ponsonby, regardless of the party, and of the friend who would have listened so gladly ? Did he mean to become the partner of Fanny Ponsonby, when he told her, in their early walk, that he should hear her own voice only on the terrace ?—when he told her, *she* would be appropriated by Lord Farnborough ? A pang of jealousy pierced her heart at the moment, indescribably bitter ; it was a pang

so sudden, so tinctured with despair, that she closed her eyes, and pressed her hand tightly upon her heart. The movement attracted the notice of Lord Farnborough.

“ I fear you are ill, indeed, Miss Wetheral. I am sure you have found the descent very fatiguing.”

“ I *am* rather ill,” exclaimed Christobelle, still keeping her eyes closed. She could not endure the light, or the figures which flitted before her. She felt extremely giddy ; so much so, she was apprehensive of falling. An exclamation from her companion caught the ear of Lady Wetheral, who was immediately at her daughter’s side. Christobelle was placed upon a bank, and she leaned against her mother’s shoulder. She waved away the gentlemen.

“ Let no one come near me, mamma. Let no one speak to me, just now.”

The duke and his lordship politely retreated. Lady Wetheral bestowed her sweetest smile upon her daughter, but it was not seen ; and it would have added only to Christobelle’s disquiet, if it had met her eye. Her ladyship was very soothing.

“ No one shall distress you, Bell ; but if, as I suspect, Lord Farnborough has spoken to you rather warmly, you must accustom yourself to

this sort of thing. Only silly girls are overpowered by a love-speech or two ;—do collect yourself, my love, and avoid attracting notice. This is all as it should be, but collect yourself.”

“ Lord Farnborough has not—” Christobelle could not proceed : she felt gasping for breath.

“ Of course not, my dear Bell. A symphony precedes an air—every thing will steal on in proper order. Rouse yourself. Your father is coming to us—do not appear girlish.”

Her father’s presence and touch revived the spirit of Christobelle. She rose, and leaned upon his arm ; she felt better when her father was near her. She entreated to be allowed to walk with *him*—to be with him on the water and on land. She should be quite well and happy, quite composed, if she walked only with *him*—with her father.

“ My dear Bell, do not shock me by any display of folly. Lord Farnborough is lingering near us—resume his assistance, and let us rejoin the company. We are detaining them on the shore.” Lady Wetheral rose, as she spoke, with great composure, but a smile of pleasure lurked beneath her grave and calm expression of countenance. How greatly was she mistaken in the cause of her daughter’s emotion !

“ You shall be my companion, Chrystal,” said her father, drawing his daughter’s arm within his, “ and I will take charge of you. We will not delay the party.”

This was not quite in the fitness of things. Her ladyship was discomposed.

“ But, my love, Lord Farnborough will have every reason to feel offended: it wears a very extraordinary appearance that his lordship should be so suddenly deserted. My dear Bell, you cannot altogether desert your companion.”

“ A father’s care will not give umbrage to any gentleman, Gertrude. I will attend to my daughter, since she requests it. No one will plead desertion when I am in question.”

This step discomposed her ladyship’s “ arrangements,” but impediments only roused her mind, and found employment for her energies. All the resources of her genius were brought into full operation by this unfortunate occurrence; and never, in Christobelle’s earliest days, did she remember her mother more present to herself—more fitted to contend with the exigences of the moment. Lord Farnborough joined them as they proceeded towards the lake. Miss Ponsonby flew towards Christobelle, at the same moment.

“My dear, I would not intrude while you were under such proper protection, but I hope you are recovered. What was it?—a little megrim?”

“We have forgotten its proper designation, and even its existence,” replied Lady Wetheral, smilingly; “I am only anxious my daughter should not undertake too much fatigue. I fear her efforts in trying to promote amusement for our guest, Sir John Spottiswoode, have overcome her strength.”

“Miss Wetheral shall not suffer from efforts of any kind this morning. My lord, take possession of your fair cargo, but reserve the seat of honour for our young friend.”

Christobelle clung to her father’s arm, but Miss Ponsonby did not observe the movement.

“Sir John Wetheral, you are my property; you must relinquish your fair daughter.”

“Are we not admissable together, Miss Ponsonby?”

“I will have no rival—yes, I change my mind; I will have Miss Wetheral for my Eucharis, and be myself Calypso, instead of Ellen Douglas. Where shall I find a Telemachus?”

“Sir John Spottiswoode,” answered Lord Farnborough.

“No, I hate a flirting Telemachus—he is saying sugared sentences to Fanny.”

“Mortimer Grey,” rejoined his lordship.

“Nonsense, Telemachus with a hare-lip?—now, out upon you! Miss Wetheral, you are mine, and you are Eucharis. I steal you from my lord.”

“I cannot resign my fair assignment—racks and tortures shall not extort my consent,” replied Lord Farnborough.

Captain Ponsonby came up.

“What are we waiting for? Your boat is filling, Mary—we must not delay. Miss Wetheral, are you of our party? allow me to lead you to the boat.”

“Miss Wetheral is mine,” cried Lord Farnborough, “and I give her to no mortal.”

“It is a freight worth contending for, Farnborough: state your claims.”

“The lady’s own fair word, Ponsonby.”

“I will hear it from her own lips. Miss Wetheral, Genius of the Lake, as they truly style you. . . .”

“I dispute the title,” exclaimed Miss Ponsonby. “I have also adopted the costume, and I choose to share the distinction.”

“Unfortunate Mary! — name fatal to peace

upon Lochleven, be still. Does Miss Wetheral consign herself wholly and solely to Lord Farnborough?"

"I wish to go with my father," eagerly replied Christobelle.

Lord Farnborough bowed proudly and coldly. Captain Ponsonby waved his hat in the air.

"Hurrah for Miss Wetheral and independence! For once, my lord, you are refused—checked in your high careering. Miss Wetheral, will you give your fair hand to a portionless son?"

Captain Ponsonby held out his arm to escort her to his vessel, but Christobelle's hand was taken gently yet firmly by her mother.

"My dear daughter thanks you, gentlemen, for your polite and amusingly-agreeable knight-errantry. Captain Ponsonby, however, is only unsuccessful from being too late. I believe honour is a treasure too delicate to endure a breath of reproach, and we are pledged to my Lord Farnborough."

"Then, 'soft ideas fly,'" said Captain Ponsonby, laying his hand upon his heart.

"'See our oars with feathered spray,'" exclaimed Miss Ponsonby. "We must stay here no longer. I must not be Calypso — fair Eucharis is taken from me. I believe I had better remain only Mary Ponsonby."

“Your sound judgment soon crushes imagination,” cried her brother. “As Mary Ponsonby, you are a good-tempered, noisy kind of girl—but Calypso, or Ellen Douglas, would prove a failure.”

“No lack of mentor, however,” observed Miss Ponsonby, as she nodded her adieus, and took possession of Sir John Wetheral’s arm. Captain Ponsonby called after her.

“Mary, I am going to take charge of Lady Wetheral. Tell Mortimer Grey, to take my place.”

“But your party will lose such a dominant spirit, my dear Captain Ponsonby,” said her ladyship, as Miss Ponsonby waved her hand, in token of assent.

“Disappointment is the lot of mortality,” replied Captain Ponsonby, gaily — “I cannot divide myself into two, and my heart is with *you*.”

The party was soon launched upon the lake. Captain Ponsonby insisted upon taking his station between Lady Wetheral and her daughter, and his gay spirits almost whiled Christobelle into cheerfulness. She saw Sir John Spottiswoode enter the first boat with Miss Fanny Ponsonby,

but he never turned to cast a glance towards Christobelle — never once came forward to say he hoped she was well and happy. Her heart swelled with sorrow so poignant, that she heeded not Lord Farnborough's anxious arrangements to make her comfortable — his efforts to secure her from the breeze which rose upon the water. She heeded nothing — cared for nothing. Miss Fanny Ponsonby might consider the excursion a party of deep delight, and Lochleven might be to her a remembrance of pleasurable things—but Christobelle felt the whole affair a mockery. Her mother endeavoured to arouse her faculties.

“My love, Lord Farnborough has spoken twice—his lordship hopes you feel no inconvenience from the sun?”

“Thank you, I am very comfortable.”

“My dear Bell, you are not aware Lord Farnborough has placed his cloak under your feet.”

“Thank you, my lord.”

“For Heaven's sake,” whispered her ladyship, “throw off the girl, and be a woman of dignified, composed manners.”

“I wish I was any thing but what I am, mamma.”

“Nonsense; not one of your sisters acted so

girlishly. I beg you will consider my shocked feelings."

Christobelle did make an effort to shake off the bonds which seemed to bind her spirits with links of iron. She turned from the contemplation of Sir John Spottiswoode and Fanny Ponsonby, but they rose before her like the undying Hydra. She saw them, in imagination, engaged in agreeable conversation—the beautiful eyes of Fanny Ponsonby fixed upon her companion's face, and her mind informed by his remarks. Christobelle saw him, in fancy, fascinated by her loveliness—eager to please—absorbed—forgetful of their own pleasant walks together—their readings—their long and happy pauses on the terrace, watching the last beams of the summer sun. She started with terror.

"My dear Bell, you are not alarmed?" exclaimed her mother. "Lord Farnborough is kind enough to take the helm."

Captain Ponsonby smiled. "What! the Genius of the Lake alarmed upon her own element? Forbid it, storms and clouds!"

"Miss Wetheral, you would feel more undisturbed if you were at my *left* hand," whispered Lord Farnborough.

"Indeed, Miss Wetheral would deceive her-

self, if she looked for rest near *you*, Farnborough : I will not part with my supporters. Miss Wetheral, do not be inveigled away from me. No whispering, unless it is allowed to all, if you please."

" You were pointing north this morning, Ponsonby ; and now the wind sits easterly."

" East, west—alas ! I care not whither,
So thou art safe, and I with thee !"

exclaimed Captain Ponsonby, turning towards Christobelle, with a smile.

Lord Farnborough became silent and sullen. A deep gloom spread over his handsome face, and its bland expression faded. Lord Farnborough wore a countenance, which Christobelle could never have recognised as the agreeable set of features which first pleased her at Lochleven. His lordship turned with indignant pride from his friend, and gave his attention to the Miss Quintins.

" Bell !" whispered Lady Wetheral, as Captain Ponsonby again stooped forward, to adjust his cloak, " you will lose him."

" Lose him !" thought Christobelle — " yes, I have lost him — for is he not uttering ' sugared sentences ' to Fanny Ponsonby ?—and is he not regardless of his old acquaintance ? How easy

it is to sit in happy, careless tranquillity, when no cloud veils our hopes ! How happy was I, till the Clanmoray party broke through the seclusion of Fairlee, and brought a Fanny Ponsonby between me and my peace ! How happy was I in my freedom, roving amid the groves of Fairlee, before Sir John Spottiswoode arrived, to teach me the glow of friendship, and then to withdraw its light !” Ill, unhappy, and indifferent to the scenery, which was her former object of devotion, Christobelle heeded not the sullen silence of Lord Farnborough, or the fears of her mother. The little attention she could spare from the conjurations of her wretched fancy, Christobelle gave to the gay and kind-hearted Ponsonby.

CHAPTER XXV.

“ Miss Wetheral,” said Captain Ponsonby, “ when I quitted Clanmoray, six years ago, I never dreamed of a fair neighbour at Fairlee.”

“ Six years ago I was nursing a doll, Captain Ponsonby.”

“ Even so. You tease your dolls in youth, and tease our hearts in age. Like a falling star, you have shot from your sphere, upon the banks of this lake, and where shall you make your rest ?”

“ You have been some time in Ireland, Captain Ponsonby, and have caught the true hyperbole.”

“ I had no practice there, Miss Wetheral. If I told a lady she was charming, it was ‘ ah now, you’re joking’—and if I advanced with classical allusions, or sparkling metaphor, it was ‘ ah now, Captain Ponsonby, you’re so droll ! ’ ”

“ The Irish ladies possibly guessed your character, Captain Ponsonby, as it appears to have been a general answer. They knew you were either in jest, or sarcastic.”

“ Upon my honour, you are wrong. I am sincere in word and deed. I am neither fair nor false, the motto of some of my neighbours. Don’t look this way, Farnborough.”

“ Miss Wetheral,” said his lordship, “ do not believe half you hear from Ponsonby’s lips.”

“ It hit my lord hard, you perceive, Miss Wetheral.”

“ My friend Ponsonby is a rover—sans eyes, sans heart, sans every thing, Miss Wetheral.”

“ Excellent—ha, ha !” laughed Captain Ponsonby. “ I can disprove the charge, Miss Wetheral. I was in love three whole days, once, at Castlebar.”

“ And why so speedy a cure?” Christobelle demanded.

“ The lady kept silence three days,” he replied, “ but, on the fourth morning, the charm dissolved, for she spoke.”

“ What could she have spoken, to break a spell so powerful, Captain Ponsonby?”

“ I met the lady in a pouring rain, and, though I had not been introduced to her, we

had met often, and were acquainted by name and sight. I offered her my escort and my umbrella. ‘Ah, now, Captain Ponsonby, there’s rason in what you say, and I’ll be obleeged to you’—was her good-humoured reply. I could bear the brogue tolerably, Miss Wetheral, for six months’ residence had enured me to its twang; but I could not away with the perfect nonchalance with which she exhibited a pair of enormous ancles, and appealed to me upon their use. ‘Ah now, Captain Ponsonby, if I’ve got no understanding above, there’s plenty below, and I’ll be charged for two pair of legs through the penny turnpikes.’ Farewell the glowing complexion and bright eyes of my love!—I never more gazed upon Miss M‘Nab.”

“Was that your *only* enlargement of heart, Captain Ponsonby?”

“Some few relapses there might have been, but none of any consideration. Miss M‘Nab was the most serious love.”

“You are difficult to please.”

“No, I think not; but I desire to find a sufficiently lovely woman, with sweetness of temper, and delicacy of manners, to love with constancy. If I ever love sincerely, it will be my life-strings—the very breath of my life.”

“ Then be very cautious, Captain Ponsonby,” said Christobelle, with a feeling of painful interest. She felt how sorrowful were the disappointments of friendship. What would the pangs of unrequited affection be ?

“ Will you be my guardian angel, and watch over me, Miss Wetheral ?”

“ I cannot undertake such a momentous charge,” she replied. Lord Farnborough watched the conversation in gloomy silence, and conversed no more with Miss Quintin. Lady Wetheral was gratified by the expression of jealousy which darkened his lordship’s fine face, for, during the little bustle of debarkation, she smiled, and hastily whispered—“ Christobelle, very well managed, my love ; a little jealousy is useful, but beware of giving *offence*.”

“ Mamma, you are quite mistaken, indeed you are.”

“ Nonsense, Bell ; I am keenly watching and deciding.” Lord Farnborough offered his hand to assist her transit at that moment, and the subject was of course dropped. Captain Ponsonby offered his hand to Miss Wetheral, and they followed in succession : he placed her arm within his own, as they touched the shore of the

little island. "Mind, you belong to me, Miss Wetheral; I shall not relinquish you now."

Lord Farnborough consigned Lady Wetheral to his father's care, and immediately returned. His lordship appeared offended at the disposition of things.

"Miss Wetheral, I am deputed by Lady Wetheral to bring you to her: allow me—" Lord Farnborough put forth his arm. Captain Ponsonby interfered.

"No one takes my guardian angel from me. I will take charge of Miss Wetheral with equal care. Miss Wetheral is mine."

"My claim began earlier, Ponsonby," remarked his lordship, with a look of fierceness.

"I will fight for every inch of mine. My good fellow, the Quintins are unattended."

"My delegated place is by the side of Miss Wetheral." Lord Farnborough threw a look of defiance at her companion, which terrified Christobelle. "Oh, pray take me to my father, Captain Ponsonby," she cried; "pray let me walk with my father."

"You shall be obeyed." Captain Ponsonby drew her among the group, who were deciding the plan of refreshment, or arranging their dress, and gave her into her father's care; but Chris-

tobelle still dreaded the looks of Lord Farnborough. She did not withdraw her arm from Captain Ponsonby's support : he smiled.

“ You *are* my guardian angel, after all. I see your fears, and, while they operate to my advantage, I hope they will continue. How delightful it is to be the object of a woman's tender care ! every thing is so kindly and silently done.”

“ I do not like Lord Farnborough's looks, Captain Ponsonby.”

“ Nor I, at all. I am very much alarmed, and I beg you will keep near me.” Christobelle laughed.

“ What are you laughing at ?”

Lady Wetheral approached, leaning on the arm of his Grace ; and Lord Farnborough also came up. Captain Ponsonby affected to tremble, and assured Christobelle, if she quitted his protection, he should be a lifeless corpse. He could not bear the lightning of Lord Farnborough's eye, or the thunder of his angry voice, at being deprived of his prey. He thought they had better contemplate the ruins of the little chapel, while the party were quarrelling about the dinner-tables. Sir John Wetheral was willing to move, and Christobelle also was anxious to leave the spot where Sir John Spottiswoode stood

pertinaciously by the side of Fanny Ponsonby. Sickness of heart came over her, and she turned from the scene.

Lochleven crowded all its beauties into the panorama viewed from St. Mungo's Isle, but Christobelle gazed upon them with vacancy : her eye could not distinguish, and her mind would not relish them. She sat upon a low, ruined wall, in utter listlessness ; and, in silence, listened to Captain Ponsonby's statement of the scenes which had taken place on the spot where they rested, when it had been the sepulchre of the clans of Glencoe and Lochaber. Christobelle's adoration of ancient legends was sunk in apathy. She dared not turn her head, lest the fearful forms of Fanny Ponsonby and her companion should startle her sight. She gazed on the heights, without perceiving their beautiful outline. She listened to Captain Ponsonby, without the power of retaining his words. A summons to the rural dinner alone roused her spirits and energy.

“ Bell, my love, I have preserved a seat for you, near *me*,” said Lady Wetheral, holding out her hand—“ Come to me, my love ; you have played truant.”

Captain Ponsonby seated Christobelle, and

prepared to take possession of an empty chair on her left hand, but Lady Wetheral smilingly interfered—

“My dear Captain Ponsonby, I believe your seat belongs to another, but probably we can make room for you. Ah! the benches interfere so; but where will you find a seat? Spottiswoode, is there not a vacant seat near you?”

“Do not disturb yourself, Lady Wetheral. I am perfectly satisfied with my present quarters; and when a turn out is beaten, I shall take a sentinel’s place.”

Captain Ponsonby accordingly seated himself, and devoted his time and attention to the wants of Christobelle, till Lord Farnborough joined them, with a cold fowl upon his silver fork.

“I have been my rounds for a supply, and can only gain one recruit, Lady Wetheral, a fowl screened from observation by a bed of parsley. Ponsonby, you’ll excuse my resumption of a seat which is mine by right of conquest.”

“I only held it in fear and trembling, Farnborough. I relinquish my seat with regret; but if I must, I must. Miss Wetheral, pity my sorrow, and admire my resolution.” Captain

Ponsonby rose, and stationed himself behind her chair.

“My dear fellow, there are two seats at the bottom of the table for you,” said Lord Farnborough.

“I am very happy in my present situation,” replied Captain Ponsonby; “I am attending upon Miss Wetheral.”

“But the Greys are quite by themselves, Ponsonby; do go down, and offer your services there.”

“Miss Wetheral, you are wishing for a slice of cold turkey; I saw you contemplating it,” observed Captain Ponsonby, who took no notice of his friend’s speech. “I fly for it.”

“I wish Ponsonby would attend to the Greys,” said his lordship, as Captain Ponsonby quitted his station. “I shall be most happy to attend upon you and Miss Quintin.”

The eyes of Christobelle were riveted in the direction of the turkey, as Captain Ponsonby remarked; for there sat Sir John Spottiswoode, and Fanny Ponsonby was at his side: she tried to withdraw her eyes, but they were fixed by leaden weights, and she gazed on. She saw Sir John Spottiswoode turn to ask Captain Ponsonby whom he should assist to a slice of the

breast ; and when Miss Wetheral's name was mentioned, he did not look towards her ; he turned and spoke to Fanny Ponsonby. Christobelle would not allow the tears to rush from their fountains, or a sigh to escape from her heart, however pained were her feelings. She only resolved never again to walk as she had done with Sir John Spottiswoode, never again to feel for him those kind and friendly sentiments which he knew not how to appreciate. Captain Ponsonby returned laughing from his mission.

“ I wish you could hear Fanny and your handsome friend, Miss Wetheral. They are trying which shall make the most glaring compliment to each other. I left your friend talking about the heart of a lover, which made Fanny grave. Do look at her, now.” Christobelle glanced towards his sister ; her sprightly countenance had faded into deep attention, as Sir John Spottiswoode spoke earnestly ; her glowing complexion had changed its bloom, and was become pale. Christobelle would have given worlds to have been acquainted with their subject.

“ Ponsonby, you are devilish rude ; no one has taken wine with the Greys,” exclaimed Lord

Farnborough, as his friend resumed his station behind the chair of Christobelle.

“Ponsonby,” cried Mr. Grey, “are you under orders there, that you stand sentinel over Miss Wetheral?”

“I wish the guard was relieved, Grey,” said Lord Farnborough. “Beg your sisters to send a deputation to Ponsonby.”

“They would prefer your lordship,” answered Mr. Grey. “I speak in their names, because they decline the publicity of confession.”

Lord Farnborough’s countenance again became gloomy, but he made no reply to Mr. Grey. His lordship turned to Christobelle.

“Miss Wetheral, allow me the pleasure of drinking wine with you.”

Christobelle was happy to do so, and by that action she gratified her mother, who sat by her, proudly happy to witness his lordship’s vexation at the conduct of Captain Ponsonby. Every one appeared happy but Christobelle: she saw every face decked with smiles, and each person appeared contented with the merriment of the scene. She alone sat ill at ease, and received no satisfaction in the attentions of Lord Farnborough and his friend. She wished to be silent and alone: she wished to think over the

events of the morning, and reckon with her heart. She wished to ascertain if her disquietude arose from unrequited friendship, or whether she indeed loved Sir John Spottiswoode. The noble friendships which Christobelle had contemplated in history, teemed with grand and inspiring actions, but she read not of eyes turned away from the object, or misery created through jealous misgivings. If she loved Sir John Spottiswoode, what would become of her, should another engross his attention and his heart? While she was lingering with him among the cliffs of the Lochleven, all was so tranquil, so happy, so calmly and fearlessly happy! Why was it not so with her in this gay group?

Christobelle was lost to all sound, till a general move was made. The tables were abandoned to the attendants, and the party retired to the extremity of the little island, to amuse themselves till the boats were again loaded with the spoil of the entertainment. Christobelle was attended by Lord Farnborough and Captain Ponsonby, who appeared tacitly determined to struggle for her attention, and annoy each other.

“Miss Wetheral,” said his lordship, “you will honour me by accepting my arm *now*.”

“Miss Wetheral cannot desert her old com-

panion," remarked Captain Ponsonby, again stepping forward and taking her hand ; but Christobelle withdrew it.

" I should like to understand your claims to Miss Wetheral's notice, Ponsonby."

" Never mind, my good fellow. A lady possesses her own right to select and approve."

" Am I to understand, Miss Wetheral, that Captain Ponsonby is selected by you?"

Lord Farnborough spoke with a bitter sneer, and stood before Christobelle with a raised complexion, awaiting her answer. She was fearful of unpleasant scenes ; she wished to avoid notice : she could only decide not to receive assistance from either gentlemen. They however walked on either side of her, and the trio silently mixed among the retiring group. Sir John Wetheral relieved his daughter's perilous situation by his approach. Lord Farnborough might conceal much beneath the restraint of polished society ; but his temper was strongly irritable ; it glistened in his eye, and fired his countenance, whenever Captain Ponsonby addressed Christobelle. The company formed into little parties, on a green bank which swelled towards the water's edge ; and, by some unseen chance, Christobelle was grouped in the

little knot which contained Sir John Spottiswoode. Their eyes had not met since they quitted Clanmoray. Captain Ponsonby and his guest were crouched at her feet, her father sat beside her, and Mr. Grey, with the Miss Ponsonbys, completed the number. The rest of the party sat only a few paces apart, but they were engaged in different subjects of conversation, and did not unite with them.

Captain Ponsonby requested his sister Fanny to enlighten the company upon the interesting conversation which had taken place between herself and her companion at dinner.

“It is vain to say,” he continued, “that the subject is forgotten, for I left you discoursing upon a lover’s heart; and your face, Fanny, was so full of interest, I was obliged to bespeak Miss Wetheral’s attention.”

Fanny Ponsonby coloured, but disclaimed any peculiar interest in the subject. Her eyes sought the ground, and Christobelle fancied they filled with tears. Her sister begged to be heard a few moments upon the subject. She was rather inspired by the dinner, the party, and the beautiful scenery, and she ventured to think she could define a lover’s heart, if her audience were inclined to listen.

“ Silence in the court !” exclaimed Lord Farnborough. “ The deponent speaks.”

“ A lover’s heart,” resumed Miss Ponsonby, waving her hand, “ is ennobled by affection, grand in its conceptions—”

“ There you are out, Mary,” cried her brother ; “ on the very threshold you have stumbled. What is a more jealous, narrowed, dull, complaining concern than love, and a lover’s heart? Can any thing be more disturbing, distrustful, and moody, or more capricious?”

“ Speak on, Arthur ; I know very little about the matter, I believe, while your long absence has doubtless taught you knowledge,” cried Miss Ponsonby.

“ Does not love create suspicion?” — Christobelle cast her eyes involuntarily towards Sir John Spottiswoode, and met his fixed, melancholy look. His eye was instantly withdrawn.

“ Does not love create melancholy?” continued Captain Ponsonby, turning to Christobelle, “ does it not produce the desire to please, while it restrains the ability, Farnborough? Does it not bow down the head, and make pale the cheek, Fanny?”

Fanny Ponsonby started at her brother’s address, but she smiled good-humouredly at the

question. Her head had bent forward, and her attention was earnestly given to the definition of the lover's heart. Her attitude had attracted the notice of her lively brother, and drawn down his remark, but its purport was received as gently, as its intention to give offence was innocent. Not so Lord Farnborough. He rose proudly from the humble position he had assumed, and retired to the group detached from his party. Captain Ponsonby continued his remarks, while a satisfied smile played on his lips.

“Altogether, love deforms and beautifies ; it makes the humble and silent man talkative ; and it causes the violent man to throw off the mask which veils his fiery spirit. The less we know of the subtle deity, the happier we are in freedom of heart and spirit ; but once receive him to your bosom, and adieu for ever to the calm pleasures of life.”

“I thought, Arthur, ‘love was heaven, and heaven was love ;’ at least, that is my idea of the passion.”

“Mary !” exclaimed her brother, “presume not to touch upon ground where your foot has never yet trod. Be wise, and remain in your ignorance, uninteresting, and uninformed. There

can be no heaven in the dire suspense, the conscious feeling, the fear of scorn, the unrequited pang, the jealous agony of heart, the sighs of uncertainty.”

Fanny Ponsonby rose hastily from her verdant seat, and Sir John Spottiswoode accompanied her, but they moved in different directions, when they reached the site of the chapel which once stood in this island, a place of worship for the living, and an asylum for the dead. Fanny Ponsonby appeared to seek refuge in solitary contemplation ; for she sought the most distant spot, and stood gazing upon the lake. Sir John Spottiswoode remained among the relics of the dead, and seated himself on the low wall where Christobelle had listened to Captain Ponsonby’s legendary tales in listless indifference.

“ In general,” said Captain Ponsonby, “ an orator draws an audience by his powers of speaking, but I have chased mine into every corner of this little earth. Either I have said too little or too much. Mary and Mortimer are my best supporters. Sir John Wetheral, you are considered a veteran. Come, Miss Wetheral, let us follow the multitude ; it is vain to waste my talent in empty space, so I dissolve the meeting.”

Captain Ponsonby sprang to his feet, and the little group gradually dispersed. Miss Ponsonby declared her brother should have been educated for the bar in lieu of the army, he held forth so fluently upon unintelligible subjects; and she challenged Mortimer Grey to assist her in discovering the lost victims to Arthur's oratory. They set forth in the direction of the spot where Fanny Ponsonby still stood absorbed, and alone. Captain Ponsonby walked chatting by Christobelle, who leaned upon her father's arm, and all bent their steps towards the little ruined chapel.

“Who would have supposed so many graves, heraldic devices, and rude sculpture, to lie forgotten and deserted here?” said Captain Ponsonby, pointing to the various relics of other times which lay half buried in the earth around. “How many stirring events have filled this soil with mouldering bones, and caused the tears to flow from maidens' eyes !”

“How many fearful feuds have made these mountains echo with shouts and cries of blood !” remarked Sir John Wetheral.

“Ay, but picture to your mind's eye the funereal procession of the clans, slowly winding down those bold cliffs in silent sorrow, while the

pibroch screamed its wild notes to wail the dead." Captain Ponsonby's countenance assumed a graver expression as he spoke, and Christobelle thought it infinitely became the cast of his features. It passed away quickly, as they advanced towards Sir John Spottiswoode, and he resumed his playful mood.

"Sir John Spottiswoode, Miss Wetheral likens you to a lover bewailing his mistress."

"Pray, Captain Ponsonby, do not say so," exclaimed Christobelle, in alarm.

"You looked as if you thought so, Miss Wetheral. Why is your eye so expressive?"

Christobelle felt distressed beyond measure at Captain Ponsonby's thoughtless speech, which elicited a cold smile from Sir John Spottiswoode. How could he smile so coldly upon her?

Christobelle had no spirits to reply to the cheerful remarks of Captain Ponsonby, who continued chatting with enviable ease of heart, upon every subject which offered itself to his notice. She was listening to a conversation infinitely more attractive between her father and Sir John Spottiswoode; but Captain Ponsonby's vivacity perpetually interrupted her attention, and called forth an unwilling and absent reply.

There is no annoyance so galling as the society of the happy, when a heart is struggling with grief, which seeks silence and solitude.

“Miss Wetheral, I bespeak your attention to those masses of clouds rising in the west ; are they not beautiful ? Did you ever fancy forms in the clouds ? I do, often. See, Miss Wetheral, I can outline a lion rampant perfectly in that fleecy cloud—can you see it ?”

Christobelle was disturbed : Sir John Spottiswoode had spoken about Alverton, and she wished to catch his words as they became indistinct. She answered Captain Ponsonby hastily, “No, indeed.”

“I will point it out more distinctly. Fix your eye upon the third dark cloud, and by the side of that cloud stands the lion rampant. Now do you see what I mean ?”

“Yes,” replied Christobelle, almost peevishly, “I think I see what you mean.” She trusted the subject was now ended.

“Well, can you distinguish a chariot and pair, Miss Wetheral ? I see them distinctly, and in excellent proportions.”

“It pains my sight, Captain Ponsonby, to fix my eyes upon the heavens.”

“I will shade the light with my hat,” said

Captain Ponsonby ; “ there, now your eyes are safe : the sun is behind my hat.”

Christobelle was obliged to give her attention to the indefatigable Captain Ponsonby, and she lost all hope of Sir John Spottiswoode’s remarks. Her spirits were powerfully depressed ; happily, as the morning had opened upon her cheerful expectations, every pleasant prospect was clouded now. Sir John Spottiswoode had been gay and playful in conversation, till they alighted at Clanmoray, and from that moment her evil genius had pursued her. Why was the companion of her walks so changed, and why was he so cold and silent to his friend ?

It appeared to Christobelle that Sir John Spottiswoode suffered under an equally potent spell. The tone of his voice as he spoke to her father was low and melancholy, and there was an expression in his withdrawn eyes, which particularly affected her. It was not of anger, he was too kind to feel angry ; it was not of irritability, such as she had seen flashing and dull by turns, in her mother’s countenance. There was an expression, touching and attractive in his disquietude, which went at once to her heart, and occupied its thoughts. She could ill endure the rapid remarks and conversation of Captain Ponsonby : how she wished to be again at

Fairlee, free from observation, and at liberty to think upon all that had occurred, in the solitude of her own apartment! Oh, that she had never seen Fanny Ponsonby! It was Fanny Ponsonby who pointed the arrow of jealousy at her heart, and tore the veil from her eyes. It was Fanny Ponsonby who taught her that friendship was but a cloak for deeper feelings, and that the pain she inflicted betrayed a heart prostrate before that Deity whose arrows, under a borrowed name, enter unsuspectingly into the soul of his victim.

“But, Miss Wetheral, you are meditating too gravely,” resumed Captain Ponsonby, after a pause of some minutes, “the tombs of a thousand souls cause your eye to grow heavy. Let us sing away care upon these swelling earths. Where are the mirthful ones, and where are the singing-men, and the singing-women? The Greys are all musical.”

The vivacious Captain Ponsonby called the party round him, and they seated themselves on the mounds which were scattered thickly round the chapel. The Greys formed the centre of the groupe, and their full voices wafted along the waters that beautiful glee of Calcot’s, “Desolate is the dwelling of Morna.” The effect

was truly delicious. Desolate, indeed, was the ground upon which they sat ; and silent, indeed, were the sounds which in former times burst from the shores of Lochleven. The harmony and its wildly poetic words accorded well with the scene before and around them. “ Yet, a few years, and the blast of the desert comes,” fell upon Christobelle’s ear, and roused a thousand emotions.

It seemed to describe in one short sentence the tale of life ; and it too truly illustrated her own wretched position. She could not repress the tears which flowed at the thought, that even in her early youth, care was beginning to do its work. She turned involuntarily to look upon Fanny Ponsonby, the author of her wretchedness. She was seated a little apart, and her head had sunk upon her breast, as though the harmonious sounds had lulled her into deep repose ; but Christobelle saw the heavings of her bosom, and knew she wept.

The Greys concluded their song, and Captain Ponsonby was called upon to lend his talents towards the harmony of the scene. The young officer was nothing loth : with inexpressible softness, and in excellent taste, he sung :

“ There’s something in that bonny face,
I never saw before, lassie ;
Your actions a’ have sic a grace,
I gaze and I adore, lassie.”

Captain Ponsonby turned towards Christobelle, as he concluded the last line of the first stanza, and he pressed his hand gallantly upon his heart, as he gave the last verses :

“Sweet is the spring, and sweet the rose,
When moistened by the shower, lassie ;
Bright on the thorn the dew-drop glows,
At morns refulgent hour, lassie :
But brighter, purer far than these
Thou art, and charm’st me more, lassie,
Than tongue can tell ; I wondering gaze,
I gaze and I adore, lassie.”

Christobelle blushed deeply at the general notice which Captain Ponsonby’s manner attracted towards her, and Lady Wetheral thought it prudent to break up the party, lest the offended countenance of Lord Farnborough should deepen, and produce results in his conduct, which would overthrow her dearest plans. She turned to Miss Ponsonby.

“My dear Miss Ponsonby, are not those clouds threatening? I have observed them some minutes with fearful forebodings : my dear Bell, fold your plaid round you, the air is becoming fresh.”

The attention of the party was turned anxiously to the west, and General Ponsonby advised an immediate return to the opposite

shore. Captain Ponsonby went forward to order the boatmen to their oars, and Lord Farnborough took his vacant place by the side of Christobelle. His lordship spoke with much vehemence of manner.

“You have been bored with your neighbour, Miss Wetheral, yet you have preferred him to me.”

“Captain Ponsonby did not weary me, my lord.”

“I hate those talking fellows, yet ladies love to be attended by them. I can’t think why all ladies like Ponsonby to run after them.”

Christobelle was offended by Lord Farnborough’s expressions. When his lordship attended her from Lochleven Castle to Fairlee Cove, all was courtesy and gallant bearing—but his lordship had become overbearing, and, if she might so express it, he was actually offensive in St. Mungo’s Isle. She made no reply.

“Allow me to take charge of you to the shore, Miss Wetheral,” continued his lordship.

Christobelle hesitated. “Captain Ponsonby, I believe—I rather think. . . .”

“Of course I must give way,” replied his lordship, drily, “of course every thing must give way to Captain Ponsonby.”

Captain Ponsonby came up, to announce all was in readiness ; and the party rose to prepare for departure. Lady Wetheral approached her daughter.

“ Bell, you are devoting yourself very publicly to Captain Ponsonby. I intreat you to be cautious, and accept Lord Farnborough’s offer of attendance.”

“ Mamma, I am offended with Lord Farnborough.”

“ Do not be silly, Miss Wetheral ; this is not the moment to exhibit offended feelings. I wish you to walk with my lord, and return under his charge.”

Lady Anna Herbert passed, leaning on Mr. Grey’s arm. “ Be quick, fair ladies, for there is every chance of rain,” she exclaimed ; “ the boatmen prognosticate weather before we reach the main land.”

There was much bustle in hurrying into the boats, and the wind rose suddenly, sweeping in gusts over the lake, ere the party left the island. Christobelle was hurried rapidly into the little vessel, between Lord Farnborough and Captain Ponsonby, and the rain began to descend in torrents, as they placed her, in the confusion, be-

tween Sir John Spottiswoode and Fanny Ponsonby.

“On, on, for your lives!” cried Captain Ponsonby, addressing the boatmen, and the party were launched upon the waters of Lochleven.

Christobelle was by the side of Sir John Spottiswoode, and her mind was tranquil as they rowed rapidly towards Clanmoray. He held an umbrella over her head; and endeavoured to guard her from the storm, by spreading his cloak round her feet and knees. She felt distressed and uncomfortable at the thought of his own exposure to the rain and wind. She intreated him to suffer her to return the cloak, without which he must be cold and comfortless.

“No,” he replied gravely, “I do not consider my own feelings, I wish to secure your comfort.”

“But I have *no* comfort in depriving you of warmth and shelter: you will catch a severe cold.”

“Never mind, Miss Wetheral; my mother and Sophia will nurse me well at Alverton.”

“At Alverton!” exclaimed Christobelle, in astonishment, “at Alverton!”

“Why not, Miss Wetheral?” he asked in low

tones, and his fine dark eyes were fixed upon her with such deep expression !

“ Oh, no, if you are ill, I will nurse you ; and Fairlee shall be your ——.”

Christobelle stopped : her heart beat thickly—she could not speak the conclusion of her sentence—a weight, as of iron, bore down her eyelids, and she remained silent.

“ You have been happy to-day, my pupil ?” said Sir John Spottiswoode, after a moment’s pause.

Christobelle waved her hand silently. She could not trust her voice ; but Fanny Ponsonby was talking to Lord Farnborough, and she was wretched at the allusion to Alverton. Curiosity, anxiety, and the horrors of suspense, gave her courage to address her companion again ; and she asked, in the recklessness of despair, why he contemplated returning so soon into Shropshire.

“ Because,” he said, “ Lochleven is now a fever spot upon my heart.”

Christobelle wept silently. Captain Ponsonby sat in the stern of the boat without speaking, as though even his gay spirit could not resist the heavy rain, and every one appeared to be cold, weary, and dispirited. Except Fanny Pon-

sonby's voice, which sung, in low tones, a plaintive air, not a sound escaped the party till they reached the shore ; and then commenced another disagreeable contention between Lord Farnborough and Captain Ponsonby.

“ Miss Wetheral, I claim you *this* time,” said his lordship, hastily passing Fanny Ponsonby, and offering his hand.

“ My good fellow,” cried Captain Ponsonby, “ I am before you half a minute, and have won the prize.”

“ I cannot understand why you persevere so pertinaciously in appropriating Miss Wetheral, Ponsonby.”

“ Can you, indeed, be ignorant upon such a point, Farnborough ? Take care, Miss Wetheral—step firmly, and hold my hand.”

“ I must observe that you are needlessly officious, Ponsonby.”

“ Tell me so elsewhere, Farnborough ; at present, I am attending upon Miss Wetheral.”

Christobelle looked imploringly at Sir John Spottiswoode, but he was uncloaking Fanny Ponsonby, and she had taken his arm, to share with him the shelter of his umbrella. Christobelle cared not, then, who became her escort. Captain Ponsonby would not understand Lord Farn-

borough's anger, or reply to his observations; he chatted gaily, as he unclasped the heavy boat-cloak, which shrouded and encumbered Miss Wetheral's figure.

“In spite of the storm, Miss Wetheral, you spring brightly from your nest, untouched by the rain-drops; how do you manage to be so unlike the rest of the world? We will not wait for the other boat, which would detain us some time. Let me get you safely to Clanmoray. Take my arm fearlessly, and I will guide and support you up the pathway. Farnborough will be kind enough to escort the Miss Greys.”

Lord Farnborough threw a haughty look at Captain Ponsonby, but he made no answer. His lordship folded his cloak round his tall, slight figure, and ascended the pathway in silence, and without a companion. The Miss Greys remained unattended on the shore of Lochleven.

“Farnborough is offended in earnest,” observed Captain Ponsonby, “and the gentle syrens are to suffer. Miss Wetheral, you have put a feud between me and my noble guest.”

“I am sorry, Captain Ponsonby, if any thing unpleasant should arise between you and my lord. It is altogether innocently done on my part.”

“Oh! yes, you look so dove-like and so guileless, and yet you wield such warfare.”

“Lord Farnborough appears easily irritated.”

“Farnborough has been used to such easy conquests, that he resents the appearance of indifference. You have piqued him, Miss Wetheral; nevertheless, I am concerned to see the Miss Greys climbing the path alone in this rain. This is an unexpected termination to our agreeable day. It has been a really delightful day to me.”

“Lochleven can never disappoint its visitors, Captain Ponsonby; even in this rain how beautiful it is!”

“Lochleven would, though, if certain persons and things did not combine to please me. I have enjoyed myself to-day—but you were my companion; I was with you at dinner—on the wall of the ruin—every where; and I have spent an extremely captivating day. I wonder what kind of day Farnborough will represent it?”

“As very agreeable, no doubt.”

“I differ with you, Miss Wetheral. Fanny and your friend have seven league boots on, I fancy—how they are bounding on! I admire your friend, Miss Wetheral—fine, handsome fellow, only he looks melancholy.”

“ Does he ?”

“ Yes ; his eyes were fixed upon your hand a full half hour at dinner—an hour, as we sat talking, and all the voyage ; yet, like Lady Macbeth, his eyes were open, but their sense was closed. He has a lady-love in the south.”

Christobelle started at Captain Ponsonby's suggestion. Impossible ! she would not believe it ! She never heard such a thing alluded to. If Sir John Spottiswoode loved in the south, Mrs. Pynsent would have named it. How came Captain Ponsonby to imagine such folly ! The very supposition of Sir John's attachment, however, created pain, and chilled her into silence. Captain Ponsonby's conversation soon became wearisome, and she was glad when they reached Clanmoray.

It was a relief to find Lord Farnborough absent, and still more a relief to perceive the second party approaching in the distance. She wanted to be at Fairlee, to enjoy rest, and silence, and free communion with her thoughts. Captain Ponsonby's spirits were oppressive, and his polite anxiety amounted to absolute annoyance. Christobelle was ill, and restless, and eager to return home.

The carriage was ordered as soon as Lady

Wetheral arrived, and the Fairlee party were supplied by Miss Ponsonby with comfortable refreshment in the article of stockings and shoes. Every other apparel had been spared, by the thoughtful cares of Mrs. Ponsonby, who had wisely ordered a *depôt* of cloaks and umbrellas on board. Lord Farnborough did not appear during their short rest at Clanmoray, and Captain Ponsonby led Christobelle to the carriage, after the ceremonies of leave-taking had concluded. Miss Ponsonby hoped to enjoy Miss Wetheral's society a little more exclusively at a future time; but she seemed to be the entire property of Arthur and Lord Farnborough at St. Mungo's Isle. There was policy in allowing novelty to exhaust its powers of pleasing; and she would reserve her society till it would fill up a chasm, formed by the secession of an admirer. "Depend upon it, all this cannot last, fair Christobelle, and, like me, you will some day search in vain for a *Télémaque*."

"*I shall not live to see the day, Miss Wetheral,*" said her brother, as he led Christobelle forward.

"Don't attach the smallest credit to Arthur's compliments," cried Miss Ponsonby, kissing her hand.

“ Mary is very incorrect in her statements, Miss Wetheral,” said Captain Ponsonby, as they passed through the hall. “ You will receive me with a smile, if I call at Fairlee to-morrow?”

“ With many smiles, Captain Ponsonby.”

“ No, one little particular welcome smile is my hope—give your many smiles to Farnborough. Fare you well!”

Christobelle entered the carriage, and Sir John Spottiswoode followed; but he seated himself by Lady Wetheral’s side. Captain Ponsonby waved his hand, and stood in the rain, till the trees concealed him from sight.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Lady Wetheral spoke of the morning's entertainment with perfect approbation, as they drove home. "Every thing was so agreeably arranged—every body was so inclined to be amused, which constituted the charm of a party *al fresco*. Lord Farnborough, perhaps, was less disposed to consider himself at ease than the rest of the group; but circumstances did go a little '*à tort et à travers*' with poor Lord Farnborough. Some people were in the wrong place, assuredly, which might create a little uneasiness; but, considering the difficulty of selecting and arranging a large morning party, it had been admirably conducted. There was a little too much vivacity in Captain Ponsonby's manner: he was rather too *empressé*—but Lord Farnborough displayed the man of fashion in every movement." Christobelle did not argue against her mother's opinions, and

Sir John Spottiswoode sat, determined to be silent.

“Lord Farnborough,” continued Lady Wetheral, “tells me he intends wandering round Lochleven some weeks longer.”

“At Clanmoray?” asked Christobelle.

“No, my love, he thinks of building at Kinross.” Christobelle sank back into her former position, quite indifferent to the whereabouts of Lord Farnborough. Her ladyship resumed:—
“Sir John, what a lovely creature is Fanny Ponsonby! I think I never beheld more beautiful eyes!”

“Miss Ponsonby is a beautiful woman!” replied Sir John Spottiswoode.

“I mean Fanny Ponsonby, the lady you monopolized, my dear Spottiswoode.”

“I mean the same lady; but I was guilty of no monopoly, Lady Wetheral.”

“She is most lovely indeed. My dear Bell, what an agreeable companion Miss Fanny Ponsonby would be to share in your lake diversions!”

“No, mamma, pray don’t ask Fanny Ponsonby—pray think of no companion for me. I am a solitary being. I love to be alone.”

“My dear girl, you are jealous!”

“I am not jealous of any one, I hope. I ad-

mire Miss Fanny Ponsonby—I think her very lovely—but I require no companion.”

“Would you live quite alone, my love? It is not the wish of a young lady in general.”

“When I feel particularly dull, mamma, I will ask for Miss Fanny Ponsonby.”

Christobelle could not clearly define her fear of Miss Fanny Ponsonby’s society, but her name would evermore be coupled with painful feelings. The first emotion of jealousy towards another had been elicited by her, and perhaps the recollection of that suffering inclined her to shun the innocent cause of the subtle intruder. Christobelle became restless at the mention of such a visitor at Fairlee; and though she endeavoured to reason away her alarm, the internal struggle increased. What could her mother mean?

The clouds broke away towards the evening, and the rain ceased; the terrace was soon dry, though the raindrops hung upon every leaf, and the bright lake lay tranquil after the storm. Lochleven was beautiful in its freshness, and the green tints of its wooded sides stood out in deeper and brighter light and shade from the heavy showers. Yet Sir John Spottiswoode did not ask Christobelle to walk with him; he did not ask her to admire with him the setting sun,

or to look with him upon the deepening shades of evening. He sat profoundly attentive over "Bacon's Essays," and not once did his eye or lip address her. She also endeavoured to read, but her thoughts wandered over the incidents of the morning. Her eyes fixed themselves upon the lake, and not upon the page of history, as she considered the disappointments of the day, and mused upon the changed manner of Sir John Spottiswoode. She wished they had never joined the party to St. Mungo's Isle—she wished she had persevered in her solitary habits, and never accepted the invitation to Clanmoray.

Captain Ponsonby had wearied her, and Lord Farnborough's manner had offended her. Were these things an equivalent to the estranged manner of her friend? She wished she had been Fanny Ponsonby, for then Sir John Spottiswoode would have sought her. She wished she had been Fanny Ponsonby, for then the gentlemen would have avoided her. She had no pleasure in being so publicly attended by Captain Ponsonby and his guest. She would have given worlds to have been silent and free from remark.

Lady Wetheral took her seat by Christobelle's

side, as she gazed vacantly upon the sparkling waters.

“Your thoughts are far away, my love, and yet I can guess their flight. They are at this moment at Clanmoray, and you are thinking of Fanny Ponsonby.”

The truth of the remark startled Christobelle. It brought the colour into her face and forehead.

“Never mind Fanny Ponsonby, Bell. You have no rival there !”

“Do you think so, mamma ?” she exclaimed. “How can you possibly tell his feelings ?”

“His attention was exclusively given to you, Bell, though I confess you coquetted rather rashly.”

“With whom did I coquette, mamma ? I cannot endure that expression, it sounds so frivolous and vain.”

“My love, strangers would remark you flirted too much with Captain Ponsonby, though *I* could comprehend your intentions, and I was amused with your little *tracasseries*.”

“But how can you judge of his feelings towards Miss Fanny Ponsonby, mamma ?”

“Because her attachment to him could not be concealed ; it was apparent in her looks, and

in the pain she discovered during his attentions to you."

"We hardly exchanged words, mamma," remarked Christobelle, in great surprise; "and then only in the boat returning from the island."

"I am ignorant of what took place during your return, my love; but I saw enough to convince me that Lord Farnborough does not return the love of poor Fanny Ponsonby."

Lord Farnborough!—and her thoughts were with Sir John Spottiswoode! Her eyes fell upon the Lake in bitter disappointment. "I thought *he* had watched me—I thought *he* had not cared for Fanny Ponsonby!" were her silent reflections.

"I see," continued Lady Wetheral, in tones of triumph, "his lordship is jealous of Captain Ponsonby; and there you acted with great tact. I am sure it will lead to a proposal. He will be afraid of Arthur Ponsonby, and it will lead him to take a hasty step, but that step will exalt you into the future Duchess of Forfar. I fancied his Grace asthmatic this morning; he certainly wheezed very painfully as we walked up the pathway. This will raise you far above your sisters, my love; far more exalted than Julia. Lord Farnborough has proved my physician; he

has entirely chased away my nervous complaints."

Christobelle could not answer. She quitted the room in haste, and took shelter in her own apartments. There she prostrated herself, and prayed for a tranquil spirit. She knew her mother's temper, and was aware of her ambitious spirit; but she did not like Lord Farnborough, and never would she sell herself to be his wife. She would not confess that she loved Sir John Spottiswoode, or that she had given her affections to one who did not value the gift; but she would surely and perseveringly decline Lord Farnborough, if indeed that hasty step was ever taken which was to proceed from anger towards his friend, Captain Ponsonby.

Christobelle had witnessed Clara's misery, and suspected that Julia was not happy in her grandeur, therefore, she would not become the third prey to her mother's overweening ambition. She might suffer reproaches and harsh conduct, but she would not marry for wealth, and pine away in silent misery, a beacon to the thoughtless and the avaricious. If Sir John Spottiswoode quitted Fairlee, and if Lochleven was a fever-spot upon his heart, Christobelle felt she must endure sorrow: it could not be

more despairing than the feelings of Fanny Ponsonby, to whom her heart now clung in sympathy, and without pain. Fanny Ponsonby would be now a companion most grateful to her taste ; all jealous fears were ended, and they could walk and weep together in fellowship. Poor Fanny Ponsonby ! Christobelle wept for her and for herself. She remembered her abstracted look, and the haste with which she fled from her brother's remarks upon love. She remembered the downcast eye when Sir John Spottiswoode addressed her upon the subject of a lover's heart, and she saw her weep during the singing of " Desolate is the dwelling of Morna." How her heart yearned now to be near her !

Christobelle felt too unwell to return again into the drawing-room. The struggle of her thoughts brought on severe headache, and she tried to forget her disquietude in sleep. Lady Wetheral visited her daughter, before she retired for the night, and smiled as she spoke of her hasty retreat.

" Did Sir John Spottiswoode miss me ?" Christobelle asked in some perturbation, as she rose from an unrefreshing doze, to listen to her remarks.

" No, my love, I believe not. He expressed

very polite regrets at your indisposition, but he has been reading the whole evening. He mentioned his return into Shropshire the end of this week."

Christobelle sank back in silence upon her pillow.

"Good night, my love, I will not keep you awake; but I trust your headache will be slept away. Take sal-volatile, and those nervous-drops, they always did me good, and we shall see what to-morrow will bring forth."

"So soon does he go, mamma?"

"Yes, my love. I think it would be advisable to ask Lord Farnborough to Fairlee, to superintend his intended little sporting-box at Kinross. I shall sound your father. Good night Bell."

Lady Wetheral retired, and left Christobelle again in silence and in darkness. She could not sleep. The night passed *so* slowly, as she lay revolving all these things in her mind! When she was happy, her nights flew by, and she rose refreshed; but now the hours lagged heavily, and her waking thoughts were upon the departure of Sir John Spottiswoode, and the introduction of Lord Farnborough in his place. She did not rise refreshed. She was tired and

unhappy when she descended into the breakfast-room. Sir John Spottiswoode was there alone ; and, as he paid the compliments of the morning, his voice was thick, and sounded hoarse. Christobelle was sure he had caught cold upon the water, and it was to protect her that he exposed himself to wet, and had thrown off his cloak. She was overcome by the recollection, and, though she approached him timidly, she was in anxious fear lest he should suffer by his attention. His hand was heated as it touched hers in salutation, and she held it in alarm.

“Oh, you are feverish and ill, and you have caught cold by giving me your cloak ! What can I do for you ?”

“I have a little headache and sore throat,” he replied, smiling ; “but it will pass away, I hope, in the course of the day.”

“It was that cloak,” replied Christobelle, quite absorbed with fear, and totally forgetful that her hand was still held by him — “it was that cloak which you took off so suddenly, against my wishes. I was sure you would be ill !”

“I am not ill,” he answered, feelingly : “your kind sympathy has cured me ; but let me observe *your* pale cheeks in return, and let me

mourn over *them*." Sir John Spottiswoode led her to the window, and looked so kindly at her, that tears sprang into her eyes. "Here are tokens of a restless night," he said—"here are signs of sleepless hours, and heavy thoughts, my dear pupil. Would I could calm your gentle heart!"

"Then stay at Fairlee!" she exclaimed, as she wept without control, and cared not for the consequences of her indiscreet words—"stay at Fairlee, and be as kind as you used to be!" Christobelle felt the arm of her companion drawn round her, and she was pressed to his heart, as he replied.—

"I *will* remain, dearest pupil, I *will* remain at Fairlee, whatever pain it may cost me! I will do whatever you bid me do, to give you pleasure. God forbid I should ever give you a moment's sorrow! I would sooner suffer a thousand pangs, than see you weep one moment. Why do you weep, and distress my heart?"

Christobelle could not help it. Was it, indeed, painful to remain at Fairlee? Captain Ponsonby was right, then, in his suggestion—there *was* a lady in the south! She could not reply; a suffocating sensation precluded all speech.

“Why are you here so early?” continued Sir John Spottiswoode, in gentle accents, as Christobelle still leaned against him; “and why are your spirits so agitated, and your rest broken? If such is your present state, what will your affectionate heart endure hereafter? Your delicate frame is unequal to contend with such deep emotions!”

Christobelle made a strong effort to check her weeping fit, and she became more tranquil. Sir John Spottiswoode’s arm still surrounded and supported her; but she felt that, when its dear support should be withdrawn, she would be cast upon the wide world for ever.

“Your friends are round you,” resumed her companion, “and you shall be the arbitress of *my* movements. I will not quit Lochleven while I can be of use to its dear inmate. Oh, my dear Christobelle! how the schoolmaster will guard his pupil! But when,” he added, hesitatingly, drawing her closer to him, and even clasping her to his heart—“when will he be here again?”

“Whom do you speak of? Captain Ponsonby?” she exclaimed; “he wearies me, and every body wearies me!”

“I do not speak of him. I do not speak of

Captain Ponsonby," replied Sir John Spottiswoode, withdrawing his arm hastily, and moving a few paces. "I mean another and happier man. You know whom I would name." He advanced again to the window, where Christobelle remained rooted. "You know whom I allude to, Miss Wetheral."

"Lord Farnborough?" she articulated, with difficulty.

Sir John would not meet her eye.

"I did mean that person. Will he not visit Fairlee, Miss Wetheral? Will he not? no, he is not worthy of such a heart—of such powerful affection!" He walked from the window to the door, and again he turned, and approached Christobelle. "It is a severe trial to have waited and loved as I have done, and yet suffer disappointment. It was a strange fancy—was it not, my pupil?—to wait so long, and hope so perseveringly? But I will not quit Fairlee, since you bid me not."

Christobelle could not comprehend Sir John Spottiswoode's emotion. She could not divine his allusions; she only grasped at his promise to remain, and even that was balm to her heart.

"Oh, yes," she repeated, "stay, and take my part, for I know I shall appeal to papa and you, if I am reproached."

“ Who dares presume to reproach you? Who dares to offer a harsh word to you? By the heavens above, if I heard his false lips utter one syllable of unkindness to a creature too gentle and excellent for his worthless mind, I would strike him dead!” Sir John Spottiswoode’s eyes struck fire, and his tall figure became still more erect.

“ Of whom are you talking?—whose lips are false?” asked Christobelle, in stupid amazement.

“ I know him!” continued Sir John Spottiswoode, kindling as he spoke; “ but I will follow him through the world, if he gives one pang to such a heart as your’s, dearest and loveliest pupil, creature of my fancy and my heart! He is not worthy of you, Christobelle.” He stopped, and fixed his eyes upon her with an expression so wretched, that she took his hand in terror: he snatched it from her.

“ Do not break my heart, Christobelle; and do not touch me, if you have mercy. Withdraw your wish, and let me quit Fairlee for ever!”

“ Oh, no, no,” she cried, clasping her hands, and sinking into a chair; “ if you go, who will stand between me and my mother?”

“ Your mother!” Sir John Spottiswoode gazed

upon Christobelle with astonishment. “Your mother!” he repeated.

“I cannot, will not marry Lord Farnborough,” exclaimed Christobelle, almost bending in agonized feelings; “and who will save me from her anger!”

“Christobelle!” burst from her companion. She heeded not.

“I will not be driven into misery to minister to ambition. It is so cruel—so very cruel.”

“Christobelle!” again ejaculated Sir John Spottiswoode, “look at me!”

Christobelle could not look up—she could not shake off her weight of misery. She sat with her hands pressed tightly upon her heart. “If you leave me, who will assist my father in warding off my reproaches? Who will soften her heart, and soothe my poor spirit? Who will plead for me, and save me?”

Sir John Spottiswoode knelt by her side, and took her cold hands in his. “Christobelle,” he said, “I will plead for you, and save you. Will you recompense me in return? Will *you* love and cherish the heart which adores and blesses you?—which would suffer all evils, all indignities, for your dear sake?”

Christobelle sat transfixed. She dared not

breathe, lest the vision should vanish from her sight.

“ Shall I tell you, Christobelle, how I have waited for you, and lived upon the hope of making you love me, when I was far away? Shall I tell you how I watched over you, and lingered till I could ask for you?”

Christobelle could only smile a reply to her lover's questions, and she was again folded in his arms. Oh, happy, thrice happy moment!

“ Shall I tell you,” demanded her companion, “ how your mother deceived me, yesterday morning, when I spoke of you upon the terrace? No, I will not allude to it now, since all my horrible fears are ended.”

“ Tell me nothing now,” she replied, “ but let me return to my room, to think—to assure myself this is not a vision—to consider all things over.” Miss Wetheral rose.

“ Will you go with me to our rocky seat, after breakfast,” he asked, “ if I resign you now? I am loth to lose you from my sight; stay a few moments longer, dearest.”

“ Not now; but I will walk with you to our old place of refuge. The bell will ring, and I am too agitated to meet my mother. I could meet no one at this moment.”

“ But, my Chrystal, one—one more embrace!” and Christobelle was encircled again in the arms of the best and dearest of human beings. She flew from his embrace to the sanctuary of her own apartment, and her first movement was prayer. She prayed for humility ; she prayed for strength to bear her load of happiness ; and she prayed that she might not love the creature beyond the Creator. When Christobelle rose from her knees, she sat down to think upon all these things.

Sir John and Lady Wetheral were at the breakfast-table, when Christobelle descended the second time. She did not once meet her lover’s eye, for she could not endure its brightness ; but her bosom had cast its load of sorrow, and her thoughts danced in the beams of a new happiness. Lady Wetheral was pleased by her appearance.

“ My dear Bell, that little headache was a *tour de jongle* to get rid of us all. Your dreams were pleasant, for your eyes sparkle, and you look most amusingly demure.”

Christobelle cast her eyes upon the ground ; a deep and most distressing suffusion crimsoned her face.

“ Perhaps,” continued her ladyship, “ your

gay dreams may have prognosticated good. I have also my dream. I am dreaming that friends from Clanmoray will call to-day."

Christobelle was silent. She knew her mother dreamt not of the blow which awaited her. She knew her ladyship did not dream of her attachment to Sir John Spottiswoode. She could not awaken her at that moment to the fallacy of her hopes, neither could she lend herself to deception. She was aware her mother's ambitious wishes believed her young heart unable to contend against a dukedom, and that her fear of Sir John Spottiswoode had ceased from the morning of Lord Farnborough's visit. She had then chatted to his lordship, in the full flow of happy spirits, and her mother's ambition had "o'ertopped" its meaning. She could not lead her into deeper error.

Christobelle's appetite was gone, and she scarcely touched the small French roll which lay upon her plate. She had eaten and drank in sorrow, though the meal did not afford nourishment; but, in joy, the very sight of food became loathsome. It appeared to Christobelle's mind, that Sir John Spottiswoode's love—his expressed love—was intellectual food, sufficient for many days; that her spirit would renew

under its blessed influence, and that creature-comforts suited only the labourer and the hireling. It was impossible to remain long at the breakfast-table. She felt the triumphant glance of her lover was upon her, and her heart longed for solitude, to question itself again upon its sudden happiness. She wanted to ask herself, over and over, if it was really true that she was loved by Sir John Spottiswoode—if it was really true that her affections were returned, and that she was happy?

Christobelle quitted the breakfast-room as early as politeness would admit, for the desultory conversation of her companions was painful to her thoughts, and disturbed her train of mental reasonings. Sir John Spottiswoode watched her retreat, but she could not meet his imploring look. She knew its purport, and she would surely keep her promise of walking with him to the rocky seat; but she *must* be alone for some time. She required a short season of solitude, to task her thoughts and collect her scattered energies; and, above all, she wished to see her father. Before Christobelle could surrender herself to the floating visions of joy which crowded on her brain, she must see her father!

Christobelle remained an hour walking up and

down her dressing-room, ere she could quell the emotions of her soul, and then she descended into her father's study. He was reading; and, for some moments, an indefinable sensation of shame kept her silent. At last, Christobelle gained courage to address her kind and indulgent parent. "Papa, if you are not engaged, I wish to speak to you, if you please."

Sir John Wetheral laid down his book, and assured his child his attention was ever alive to his Chrystal's summons: but she became agitated and confused as she approached the subject. "Papa," she stammered forth, "I came to say something, and I don't know how to say it."

Sir John Wetheral smiled, and drew her to him. "Well, my love, which is it—my Lord Farnborough, or the humble Captain? It must be a novel subject which confuses my poor little companion, and it *must* be a love affair. Which of them is intending to deprive me of your society, Chrystal?"

"Neither, papa." Christobelle became still more distressed and confused at his mistake.

"Well, then, it must be the old duke, or that young man with the whip. I cannot approve of either, my love."

Christobelle threw her arms round his neck. "No, no, papa ; think again."

"Ah, I have it, Chrystal. It is that young wanderer upon the terrace, who is watching the windows of your apartments so eagerly." Christobelle's head fell upon his shoulder. "Be not alarmed, my child. If there is a heart as kind as Boscawen's, and as affectionate as Pynsent's, it is the heart of Spottiswoode. Now go, and tell him what I say."

Christobelle was too confused and too joyful to speak her gratitude, but her heart was known to the parent who had loved and watched over her from the hour of her birth. He led her to the door. "Go, my best love, and tell your friend, and my friend, that he has set at rest all my hopes and fears for your welfare. Tell him it is only into his hands I would relinquish my child. There, fly to the poor puzzled youth, for he is lingering under your windows." Sir John Wetheral closed the door, and his daughter was alone in the hall, almost stunned by the rapidity of the morning's eventful incidents. She would have proceeded to the terrace, but her mother's voice called her to the sitting-room.

"Bell, is that you?"

Christobelle found her ladyship seated in a

lounging chair, employed with her knotting. She looked up.

“I thought I recognized your step, my love; the fairy step, as Lord Farnborough calls it. I wish you to remain entirely in the grounds, Bell; indeed, I wish you not to quit the house this morning. Stay with me, and wind these silks; they plague and impede my work.”

“I am only going to the cliff, mamma: if any body comes, you will be so good as to send for me, perhaps.”

“My love, I cannot send the whole establishment in different directions for you, upon all occasions. Your walks become a serious evil.”

“I will remain on the terrace, then, mamma: I have promised to join Sir John Spottiswoode.”

“I do not approve of such daily walks, Bell—such wild roaming over the hills. I wish you to wind these obdurate skeins for me: you forget caution and propriety. I insist upon your avoidance of Sir John Spottiswoode this morning. Lord Farnborough must not always find you appropriated.”

Sir John Spottiswoode appeared at the window which opened upon the terrace at this moment. Lady Wetheral kissed her hand to him, and he entered.

“My dear Spottiswoode, assist me to persuade my restive daughter that so much exercise is hurtful. I wish her to remain with me this morning.”

“The day is so beautiful, Lady Wetheral, and the air so reviving!” he observed. “I am sure this fresh breeze will exhilarate her, and bring the roses into her cheeks.”

Her ladyship raised her glass to her eye, and slightly examined her daughter’s countenance.

“Bell, my love, your bloom is less vivid, but I think I prefer the delicacy of its present tone. I have very essential reasons for wishing you to remain with me this morning. I feel languid and unwell—very languid after the fatigues of yesterday.” Lady Wetheral’s voice grew fainter as she uttered the last sentence: and she sank back in her chair, in an attitude of languor. “My love, pray wind those skeins for me. I am a poor creature, you see.”

It was useless to contend: Christobelle’s destined walk must give way to her mother’s quiet determination that she should not become conspicuous with Sir John Spottiswoode, and it was her duty to yield to her wishes. Christobelle relinquished, therefore, all hopes of a *tête-à-tête* with her lover, and prepared to obey

her commands, by occupying herself with the silks. She had not courage to meet the disappointed eye of her companion, nor indeed did she wish him to discover, by the expression of her own orbs, how severely she suffered by her obedience.

Sir John Spottiswoode was silent under the existing order of things, and forbore to offer an opinion upon its unfitness; but he quietly assisted Christobelle's operations, and held the skeins for her better convenience in winding them. The whole affair arranged itself in such perfect pantomime, that she could not resist a smile and glance at her assistant, which amply repaid her self-control. An expression of gratified happiness played upon his manly countenance, and lighted up his eyes, which communicated itself to Christobelle's heart, and caused intense gratitude for the blessing conferred upon her in the gift of his affections. She felt that she could meet her mother's opposition, her irony, her bitterness, with patience, since she had won all that seemed valuable upon earth—all that was excellent, and affectionate, and kind—the heart of Sir John Spottiswoode. She had received the blessing too, at the very moment when her fears believed him indifferent to her

love: and when she suffered the pangs of jealousy, elicited by Fanny Ponsonby, and continued by the surmise of Captain Ponsonby; yet it was a change so suddenly effected, that she could scarcely believe in its reality. Her lover knelt before her, holding the extended skein, yet she could not place faith in the certainty that all was not a dream: she heard her mother speak, and yet it appeared a vision, from which, she trusted, she might never wake.

“My dear Spottiswoode, you are Hercules with the distaff.”

“I have made my choice too, like Hercules, Lady Wetheral. I have selected virtue, and I find I have also gained pleasure, for they are seldom separate, after all. Pleasure does not include virtue always: but virtue rarely moves without pleasure; I find it so now. I am virtuously employed, and it is my greatest pleasure. I have great pleasure in assisting your labours, Lady Wetheral.”

“You appear to great advantage, Spottiswoode; but I hope you are not making a pain of pleasure. Bell has already broken her thread twice.”

“Miss Wetheral is all kindness; she bears

with my awkward attempts to be useful. I know I am very trying to her patience. Another thread broken! My dear Miss Wetheral, be calm."

"I believe I must relinquish it, for a few moments," Christobelle observed; "my hands are so tremulous."

"I am going to lecture you, Miss Wetheral, to spare your mamma the trouble of pronouncing an exhortation in her languid state. Pray, make another trial, and hold your hand steadily—*so*." Sir John Spottiswoode pressed her hand affectionately, and held it as he continued—"Now, my dear pupil, you must try to feel tranquil, and be assured all efforts succeed, if they are made with perseverance."

"Very well," said Christobelle, laughingly; "my next effort shall be boldly made."

"But, stay," he added, detaining the hand she would have withdrawn, "stay one moment, while I examine this entanglement." Sir John Spottiswoode bent forward to conceal his movement and Christobelle's confusion from Lady Wetheral's notice. "This is rather a puzzling affair at this moment, Miss Wetheral, but we must succeed in time by mutual perseverance—

if you are calm, and I am near you, to offer counsel. Do you perfectly understand me?"

"I believe I do. I am to be calm, and try to unravel this puzzling work in patience. I quite understand you, and I will try to do so."

"When did my pupil ever misunderstand my words?" he replied, with energy; and, forgetful of his own cautions and Lady Wetheral's presence, he caught Christobelle's hand to his lips. She was terrified at the action, but her mother had little time to express her indignation, for the door was suddenly thrown open, and the servant announced Lord Farnborough.

His lordship entered with a heated and raised complexion, and he attentively surveyed the apartment, as he spoke.

"So I am before him at last. I thought I should find the fox in his earth, for he was off an hour ago: this is capital."

"My dear lord, you are most welcome. This is really a neighbourly action." Lady Wetheral rose promptly from her languid repose, and received her visiter with bright smiles of pleasure. Lord Farnborough recollected himself, and recovered his self-possession, as he paid his *devoirs* to the party.

"I fear I came in rather hastily, Lady We-

thelial ; but you will excuse my eager manner, when you learn its motive. I thought Ponsonby had been before me. We have had a race for it, I assure you."

"Captain Ponsonby has not called, I believe," replied Lady Wetheral, in tones of mingled triumph and hope, "unless he is closeted with my husband."

"Ha!" exclaimed his lordship, "then he *has* preceded me? Lady Wetheral, allow me an immediate conference, if you please."

"Certainly, my lord; we will retire into my own sitting-room."

"Here, if you please, for time is very precious. Will you allow me to lead you upon the terrace, Lady Wetheral? You must excuse my impetuosity."

Lady Wetheral accepted Lord Farnborough's offered arm, and she was hurried upon the terrace; but not a glance or movement on her part betokened fatigue, or a remnant of her past languor. Her step was firm, and her eyes beamed with expected triumph.

"Chrystal, my own Chrystal," cried Sir John Spottiswoode, as the receding figures were lost to sight, "if ever I loved and admired you more truly and fondly than I fancied I could do, it

was at the moment you renounced your plans to obey a parent, with a smile on your lip, and regret in your dear heart."

"But my real misery is yet to come," exclaimed Christobelle, though she felt herself pressed to the warm heart of her lover, and there was blessedness in the pressure.

"But why so?" he asked tenderly; "what has Chrystal to fear?"

"Lord Farnborough's visit is connected with *myself*; I know it as surely as if I heard the words spoken. I know I have *so* much to endure from my mother!"

"But you are mine, Chrystal; and who can take you from me now? Are you not my own, my very own?"

"I know it: I feel secure of *you*; but my mother will say such harsh things!"

"Fear not, my beloved. If we are true to each other, surely we can endure a little trial of patience."

Yes, he spoke truly. Christobelle could endure a long, long trial for *his* love. She could suffer a protracted misery, to deserve a heart so excellent. She had, too, a dear hope to sustain her, for her father approved her sentiments, and he would shelter her from the harsh reproaches

of her mother's ambitious spirits: she could meet her lover's entreaty to be patient with smiles. She told him she would endure all things with firmness—that she would not anticipate evil. She called upon him to rejoice with her in her father's approval, and she told him of her interview and confession. How swiftly did their short *tête-à-tête* glide by! and how delightedly did Christobelle listen to his fears respecting Lord Farnborough!

“But why did you not tell *me* all this? Why did you suppose such incredible things in silence—to leave me in such cruel and useless suspense? Oh, Spottiswoode, *one* word yesterday morning, and all this had been spared us!”

“No, I was silenced by your mother for ever, in our morning lounge upon the terrace. Had you not disclaimed all idea of Lord Farnborough this morning, and had not hope rushed into my heart unbidden, by the confession of your misery, I had never dared to breathe a word of my sentiments. I believed you loved Lord Farnborough.”

“She could not tell you *that*! Surely my mother did not tell you so—oh! she never told you I cared for *him*!” Christobelle shuddered at the thought; but the encircling arms of her

lover restrained the movement which impelled her to start from her chair.

“I was assured your heart was on the point of acknowledging Lord Farnborough’s power, Chrystal—and your mother spoke in terms of proud approval.”

“Oh, my mother, my mother!” exclaimed Christobelle, weeping at the thought of her cruel policy; “I might have been sacrificed for ever to your ambitious wishes! I should have been given in utter wretchedness to a man I did not love, and consigned to hopeless misery!”

“Weep not, dearest,” said her companion, and I will tell you how your presence shall brighten and bless the scenes of my solitary wanderings at Alverton — how it shall illumine my future life, and reward me for my patient waiting. Did you but know, my love, how I feared you would be appropriated, ere I could claim an interest in your heart, and, yet, how firmly I resolved to leave you to the working of its own resolves, you would pity and love me for my resolution.”

“I *do* love you!” Christobelle concealed her face upon his shoulder. They were silent for some moments, but his lips were pressed upon her forehead, and she was in his arms—both too engrossed, with the certainty of being at last

happy, to break the deep silence. Christobelle forgot her mother — she forgot Lord Farnborough; she thought not of his errand, or her future anger. She was in a trance:—she thought all reproach—all suffering—all unkindness, had no further power to wound, for she belonged to her lover, and he would shelter her, as he did at that moment, in his beloved embrace. The world without might struggle with deep and mighty commotion—it might drink deeply of the elements of strife, and do battle with the stirring natures of mortality—but *she* was safe from strife and suffering now. She had given herself, heart and soul, to the man she loved dearer than herself, or aught in creation besides. She was the promised bride of Sir John Spottiswoode!

CHAPTER XXVII.

Lord Farnborough's mission was speedily developed to Lady Wetheral, as they paced the terrace together. His lordship at once opened the subject, which lay so closely upon his mind's peace, and at once laid his dukedom at Christobelle's feet.

“ Upon my honour, Lady Wetheral, my respect for your daughter is excessive, and I wish to make known my sentiments at such an early period, because I see I have rivals. Ponsonby is over head and ears in love, and there's no knowing how many more will become so ; for her beauty is really something extraordinary. Miss Wetheral is the loveliest creature I have ever seen.”

“ My daughter is flattered by such remarks, my dear lord, and her mother feels proud of such an encomium. She is a treasure to me, in every

sense of the word, as she will prove to the man who wins her."

"I can offer much more than Ponsonby," continued Lord Farnborough; "and I think, at this very early stage of our acquaintance, an earl's coronet in possession, and a duke's strawberry-leaves in prospect, may perhaps entitle me to her notice beyond the claims of humbler men."

"Lord Farnborough may claim a lady's preference upon still higher grounds than mere rank or fortune," said her ladyship, with smiling approbation, and gently pressing his lordship's arm. Lord Farnborough was gratified by the compliment.

"It is very soothing, Lady Wetheral, to my feelings, to be assured that my suit is not displeasing to her parents. May I hope Miss Wetheral's affections are disengaged?"

"I can answer for my daughter's free heart, my lord. I am sure—indeed, I know her affections are untouched."

"You think Ponsonby has not got before me into her good opinion?"

"I have authority to say, Captain Ponsonby has not *yet* succeeded, my dear lord."

"Ponsonby has been very successful with the female heart, and I know he was attentive yes—

terday—but he has nothing to offer. I think Sir John Spottiswoode fluttered round Fanny Ponsonby — nothing *there*, you think, Lady Wetheral?”

“My daughter’s affections are not so lightly won, my lord; and my interest is not with Sir John Spottiswoode.”

“It would be a great feather in my cap, to win Miss Wetheral from all competitors. She would be a star in town, and cause a great sensation. She shall be the best-dressed woman in St. James’s, if she appears there as Lady Farnborough. She would have the most splendid jewels in the drawing-room.”

“My dear child’s tastes are simple and unexpensive, Lord Farnborough. She does not court notoriety. Her heart is happiest in her own home.”

“That is a lady’s throne,” observed his lordship, “and man is happy, who marries a creature devoted to his comforts.”

“Is the duke aware of your present application, my lord?”

“I believe he surmises what I am about, Lady Wetheral, for your daughter’s charms almost led to a quarrel this morning with Ponsonby. It decided me at once to announce my wishes here,

or he would be laying siege to Miss Wetheral. I saw that pretty clearly. However, if you stand my friend, Lady Wetheral, I am safe."

"My lord, I *think* my wishes will point my daughter's affections; I believe I possess her entire confidence, and the control of her judgment; and the very proper way in which you announce your wish of an alliance with our family, prompts me to exert my influence in your favour. I admire your high-spirited address, my lord, in consulting *me* before you applied to the lady."

"I wish to do every thing in order," replied his lordship, "and I know Ponsonby has serious intentions, which gave me some alarm. When may I pay my respects to Miss Wetheral? Will she allow me an interview soon, Lady Wetheral? You may conceive my impatience to be received as one of your family."

"I will summon my daughter, my lord, and leave you together: I am sure of my child's ingenuous heart; and she will scorn to allow any man to remain in suspense, when his full intentions and hopes are disclosed."

Lady Wetheral's appearance at the sitting-room window unfolded her thoughts and expectations to Christobelle's mind in one glance. The

subdued look of triumph, the forced calmness of manner, contrasted with the glowing expression of every feature, left her daughter not an instant in ignorance of what had taken place. She felt that her hour of trial was already arrived—that she must collect her thoughts, and meet, with patient firmness, all the crosses in her path—that she must redeem her promise of patience to her lover. Christobelle had little leisure for mental reflection, for Lady Wetheral entered the room, and compelled attention.

“My dear love, Lord Farnborough requests the honour of your attention for a few moments: I have promised that you will join his lordship on the terrace. Your instant acquiescence will oblige me, Bell.” Sir John Spottiswoode quitted the room. She continued—“It is a relief to lose sight of one’s friends for a few minutes; I wish Spottiswoode had found amusement elsewhere. Hasten, my dear girl, and meet me after your little consultation in my room. I won’t say a word till you rejoin me; but, my dear child, this is the very happiest hour in my existence—a happier hour than when my Julia told me she had won Ennismore. My wish, Bell, has been gloriously fulfilled; every thing

has crowned that wish, without an effort. I am a proud and happy mother !”

“Oh, mamma,” cried Christobelle, kneeling before her, “do not misunderstand me, and do not hope against hope. I cannot marry Lord Farnborough !”

“Do not rouse me into anger, Bell, as you hope for peace in this world ; and do not let me find you a mean-minded creature, content to live in insignificance. Go instantly, and meet Lord Farnborough.”

“I cannot go, mamma ; I have no affections to bestow upon Lord Farnborough — do not let me meet him ! Tell him, I deplore his disappointment, if it proves such — but I cannot see him !”

Lady Wetheral’s face turned pale as marble, as she caught Christobelle’s hand, and dragged her forward.

“Tell me only that you are thinking of Captain Ponsonby, to break my heart at once, Bell !”

“Oh, no, not Ponsonby—I care not for Captain Ponsonby, mamma : but do not look so pale and angry—you terrify me !”

“So you have led me into error—deceived my hopes — and destroyed me, while you sought

the love of Spottiswoode ! Is that truly so ? Is it Spottiswoode you love ?”

Christobelle shrank from her grasp in terror. Lady Wetheral’s face and manner became fearfully changed ; she caught the back of a chair to support herself.

“ Bell, I have answered for your dutiful submission to my wishes. I have promised for you—I have told Lord Farnborough you are free. Go to him, and say that I spoke in truth. A dukedom, Bell !—a dukedom !—my last, my only child, a dukedom is offered you !”

Christobelle sat in terrified silence : she could not endure to see her mother suffer, but she had no consolation to offer. Lady Wetheral approached her, and took her cold hands in hers.

“ Bell, a child never yet prospered that gave pain to her parent, and now you can raise me into happiness by your obedience. To see my daughter a duchess—a duchess, moving in stately magnificence, is the dearest wish of my heart. It has been my hope, ever since your first introduction to Lord Farnborough—my dearest project by day and by night, my earthly contemplation for many days ! Go to him, Bell, for I have answered for you, and you *will* go ; think better of it, think of your future regrets, when

repentance will come too late! Go to Lord Farnborough, I command you, Bell."

A mother's commands had never been disputed by Christobelle, and it was, perhaps, better to meet his lordship. By an open declaration of engaged affection, which would end all further hopes on his side, Christobelle's disquietudes would cease; and her mother would reconcile herself to a step which must be unavoidable, by every honourable and upright principle of justice. Christobelle had no doubts to solve, no inquiries to make with her own heart. Every feeling of her soul was given to Sir John Spottiswoode, and Lord Farnborough had not deserved to endure suspense. She obeyed her mother's command, therefore, to meet his lordship upon the terrace. Her steps were slow, and her mind was torn with contending feelings, but she went forward.

"Bell," said Lady Wetheral, as she passed through the open window, "do not be rash."

Lord Farnborough approached with respectful pleasure. Christobelle returned his greeting with a silent bow, but she could not command words, and she stood in silence before him. His lordship hesitated.

"Miss Wetheral is aware, I presume, of my

errand here — of my anxious wish — of my hopes?”

“My mother has informed me, my lord, of your wishes—of the honour done me, but . . .”

“Will you do me the honour to walk up the terrace, Miss Wetheral, while I explain my feelings and motives.” His lordship offered his arm; Christobelle declined it silently. “I trust you will not misinterpret my action, Miss Wetheral. I am not a confident man, or one who presumes upon a parent’s interest in my behalf—it was done in all respect, Miss Wetheral.”

“I am sure it was so, my lord—my only motive for declining your assistance, is the fear of giving a hope, where none is intended.”

His lordship appeared startled and annoyed.

“When I have explained my wishes, Miss Wetheral, to you, and when I state my hope that you will allow me to visit you at present, simply as a friend, till you can give me a dearer title, I trust you will listen calmly to what I am further anxious to say.”

“Lord Farnborough,” replied Christobelle, with trepidation of voice and manner, “I will not deceive you for one moment. Pray do not think of me, for it is useless. I—I—cannot

love you, or even give you hope that I ever shall love you. Pray do not think of me."

Lord Farnborough bowed with great stiffness. "I beg your pardon, Miss Wetheral, for this annoyance, but, allow me to say, I was assured you were disengaged."

"My lord, I was ——, I am ——." The words died upon Christobelle's tongue; she could not utter them.

"Ponsonby has made an impression upon your heart, Miss Wetheral! I thought—I was *sure* of it yesterday! That fellow is born to be my misery."

Christobelle laid her hand upon his lordship's arm, and endeavoured to speak distinctly, but she could only articulate, "No, no, no!"

"Do not fear me, Miss Wetheral," replied his lordship, with offensive hauteur, "I am not intending to wreak vengeance upon a man you approve, but this is the second time he has traversed me!"

"Captain Ponsonby is nothing to *me*, my lord; Captain Ponsonby can never be any thing to me!" Christobelle exclaimed, "but pray excuse me if I drop the subject for ever. I am honoured—I am flattered—but it never can be, Lord Farnborough."

His lordship gazed eagerly in her face. "Repeat those words again, Miss Wetheral! Assure me again that Ponsonby is, and will be, nothing to you!"

"I do repeat it, my lord."

"Then, Miss Wetheral, I am content. I will believe your assertion, and it gives me hope. Do not be in haste to reply. Allow me your attention for a few moments."

"I cannot listen, my lord. I have spoken the truth, and I beg to be allowed to say this subject must end for ever. I have no affections to bestow upon yourself, or upon Captain Ponsonby."

"I beseech you to listen one moment — one moment, Miss Wetheral! I do not ask for your affections yet. I could not presume to hope even for a preference, upon our short acquaintance. I only pray for leave to visit you—to try and interest your heart, by my attentions and my love. Lady Wetheral gives me hope, Christobelle!"

"No one can give hope for another, my lord."

"Lady Wetheral assures me your heart is free."

Christobelle hesitated. Why did she feel

ashamed to utter the truth, and end at once the displeasing subject? Why hesitate? She suffered many struggles between shame and timidity, but at last the victory was gained, and she spoke with resolution.

“My lord, I love another — I have given my affections to another person—excuse me.”

His lordship bowed low, with peculiar frigidity of manner. “I wish you good morning, Miss Wetheral. I regret my intrusion: I am answered.”

Christobelle curtseyed with equal hauteur.

“I am sorry my words have produced dissatisfaction, my lord. It was but just that my sentiments should not be misunderstood, and I do not reproach myself for having withheld an ungenerous and delusive hope. Good morning, my lord.”

They parted with a second silent and distant salutation, and Lord Farnborough quitted the terrace.

Christobelle stood some moments, vainly endeavouring to gain fortitude to meet her mother — but now the deed was done, and his lordship had departed, the terror of Lady Wetheral’s anger fell upon her heart, and she flew to her father for protection. Sir John Wetheral was

in his study conversing with Spottiswoode, when Christobelle appeared, and both gentlemen rose, smiling at her entrance; but she threw herself into her father's arms with hurried steps, and besought him to save her from her mother's reproaches. She felt it was impossible to meet her alone, or bear the indignant flashes of her eye. She implored her father to be the bearer of her refusal, and to endeavour to soften her mother's anger, when she learned that Lord Farnborough was returning to Clanmoray, a rejected and offended suitor.

Sir John Wetheral soothed his daughter's fears with kind approval of her conduct. He spoke affectionately of her attachment to his friend, and commended the propriety of her sincere avowal to Lord Farnborough. He would leave her now under the soothing care of Spottiswoode, who was destined, he hoped, to be her future guide through life. He would give his Christobelle to his care, to listen to his reasonings and his affection, while he himself sought the presence of his lady. He bade his daughter fear nothing. He would shield her from all the storms of life, till he relinquished her into a husband's care. And, while she continued to act with honourable and high principles, untouched

by sordid temptations, and the miseries of an insatiable ambition, she must be free from self-reproach, and would be patient under trials which could not greatly affect her peace of mind. Sir John Wetheral then placed his daughter's hand within the warm grasp of Spottiswoode, and left them together.

Lovers' happiness is composed of a million nothings, and every indescribable rapture, which in after days provoke the laughter and ridicule of its votaries. All those who have loved understand it well—and to those who have never known a sincere attachment, it is a sealed book. Christobelle utterly forgot all mundane concerns, as she listened to the fond effusions of her lover's heart, and owned an affection deep and imperious as his own. Christobelle almost forgot there was a drop of bitter yet left, in her cup of joy.

Sir John Wetheral passed on to his lady's apartment, little aware of the scene which awaited his peaceful nature, produced by defeated ambition, in an ardent spirit. Lady Wetheral was suffering severe nervous excitation as he entered her sitting-room, for Christobelle's protracted absence boded evil to her hopes. She

looked earnestly in her husband's face, to read its import.

"You have seen Bell, you have seen Bell — tell me at once, if I am to be the mother of Lady Farnborough."

"Gertrude," replied her husband, calmly, "do not destroy your health by these nervous excitements."

"Sir John, my nerves are excited by the conduct of my children. Am I the mother of the future Duchess of Forfar? Am I to be the proud mother of a child raised to the very pinnacle of worldly grandeur?"

"You will be the mother of a child truly happy in her worldly prospects, if your mind will but look rationally upon its promises, my dear Gertrude."

"Am I to be the mother of Lady Farnborough?" repeated the excited parent.

"Our daughter has not committed the base folly of accepting one man, when her heart belonged to another, Gertrude."

"Did *I* not do so before her, Sir John? I never repented *my* marriage!"

"It might be so, my love, but Chrystal never possessed your ambition, to soar over affection and honour, through its cold dictates."

“Am I to understand Bell has refused Lord Farnborough, Sir John? Is that the reading of your words? Pray speak it in intelligible words.”

“Christobelle has declined his lordship, Gertrude. Her heart preferred Spottiswoode, and my concurrence went with it.”

“Perhaps you will convey a message from me to the future Lady Spottiswoode of Alverton, among the flat meadows of Worcestershire, Sir John,” replied his lady, in the calm tones of suppressed anger. “Tell my Lady Spottiswoode it is my request she never presumes to appear before me during the days of her singlehood.”

“Gertrude, Gertrude,” exclaimed her husband, “is this request a fit message from a mother to her child?”

“I had always a dislike to scenes,” observed her ladyship, “therefore, I shall not reproach Miss Wetheral with her deceptive conduct in allowing attentions from a quarter which I never countenanced, and after my express commands to avoid them. I ever deprecated scenes before Lady Kerrison — but her violent spirit scorned restraint. She gave me deep pain; and Lady

Ennismore's banishment has caused me pain — but this stroke lies far deeper in my heart !”

Lady Wetheral became all nerve : her whole person was in a nervous trembling. Her husband failed in every effort to tranquillize her spirit.

“ You may dilate upon the supreme excellence of your favourite Spottiswoode, my love, and you may assure me your daughter is an enviable and a happy being ; but I know she has cast aside a ducal coronet, to wed the poor baronet of Alverton ! I will see her no more. I will never see her again.”

“ My dear Gertrude, be tranquil, and be rational.” Sir John Wetheral never could be persuaded to lose his temper.

“ I am perfectly tranquil and calm, Sir John. I am perfectly tranquil, and very rational in my commands, when I persist in banishing my unnatural child from my sight. Miss Wetheral has taken her measures, and I assert mine. We do not meet again.”

“ This is wrong, a wicked wrong, towards an innocent child, Gertrude !”

“ She is very innocent,” retorted Lady Wetheral, with bitterness. “ Her innocence has caused her to oppose my wishes, and to dare

that which her sisters never presumed to do. They never contravened my views, nor thwarted my wishes in their establishment, and they married well !”

“ Was it *well* with Clara ?” demanded her husband, with earnestness of manner as startling as it was novel—“ was it *well* with Clara ? Did she not quit her home clandestinely, to become the wife of Kerrison ? — miserable in her short career, and sudden in her death, was she happy ? Is Clara to be held forth as an evidence of maternal care, in such a momentous concern ?”

“ Forbear, Sir John, forbear !” cried his lady.

“ Nay, but Gertrude, has it been well with Julia, whom you taught to fly at quarry so distasteful ? Wedded to imbecility — banished from her home and country, unseen and unheard of—is she, too, an evidence of your talent in contriving establishments ?”

“ I tell you,” exclaimed her ladyship, “ Julia is an earl’s wife ; and Clara’s position was high and grandly placed, but her own hand plucked her down. Who can reproach *me* ?”

“ I will not reproach you, Gertrude, but I counsel you to spare this last poor child. Remember only your fatal mistakes, and do not

add a third victim. I will not allow Christobelle to be sacrificed to your ambition."

"Ring for Bevan, I am very ill — ring for Bevan, but let no one else come near me. I am *not* hard-hearted! Clara called me hard-hearted: I am not hard-hearted! I am a disappointed, deceived mother. Where is Bevan?"

Mrs. Bevan appeared with the remedies, which time had taught her to dispense as judiciously as her predecessor, Mrs. Daniel Higgins, had done; but Lady Wetheral's attack threatened a longer continuance than usual. She would fain have retired to her own room, but Sir John perceived her inability to move without assistance: her ladyship trembled excessively. He bore her in his arms to her bed-side, and Mrs. Bevan, after assisting her lady to repose, proceeded to close the shutters, and exclude the bright sunbeams. Lady Wetheral became still more nervous.

"Bevan, let me have light—let me have light! If I cannot see the sun, it will be darkness of body and mind. Don't leave me, Bevan. Sir John, where are you?"

Sir John stood near, in a state of offended alarm: his mind was discomposed—it never became angry.

“ Sir John, I cannot remain at Fairlee : take me back to Wetheral. Bell has destroyed my health. I was quite well till this wretched match, which has destroyed all my plans, and thrown down all my hopes ! It has made me ill—worse than ever !”

It was not in the power of reason, much less in Sir John Wetheral’s power, to check the indignant feelings which affected his lady’s mind upon the subject of Lord Farnborough’s refusal. Each attempt to argue away their violence did but increase the evil. Nothing could induce her ladyship to receive Christobelle at her bed-side, or hear a word pleaded in her defence. Christobelle’s attachment to Sir John Spottiswoode, and her subsequent refusal to accept Lord Farnborough’s proposal, appeared to destroy the ties of affection which had never been closely woven together, for his ladyship declared her daughter’s presence would kill her upon the spot. The sad event which occasioned her flight from England, faded under the shock of Lord Farnborough’s dismissal. Scotland would be to her sickened heart a remembrance of misery. Either Christobelle or herself must quit the shores of the now desolate and cold Lochleven, upon whose bosom she had once

enjoyed such bright anticipations. All was ended, and joy had closed her brilliant wings for ever. This was an irrecoverable stroke.

Sir John Wetheral did not conceal from Christobelle the mandate which banished her from her mother's presence; and the consolation of Spottiswoode's presence was indeed necessary to soothe her distress of heart. Christobelle would cheerfully have contributed to her parent's comfort, had her wishes extended to less than the sacrifice of all happiness; but surely it was not reprehensible to withhold a shadow of hope, when her heart was not with Lord Farnborough! Surely it was not right to turn from the man she loved, when her affections were his beyond the power of recal, and when the voice of ambition alone demanded it! True, Julia and Clara's views were moulded by her mother's spirit, but then their hearts were untouched, and their unshackled affections might submit to her dictation. Ambition also impelled them to meet her wishes, and no private feeling struggled within their soul to deaden its influence; but Christobelle was another's!—she might suffer, but she could not change!

Sir John Spottiswoode believed that time would soften Lady Wetheral's displeasure, but

Christobelle knew too well the bitterness of the disappointment, to lay such unction to her soul. Had she ever been a favourite with her ladyship—had her youth been pleasant in her sight, she might have hoped to obtain an influence through the operation of time, sufficient to effect a reconciliation in favour of her present attachment. But that had never been the case. Her birth was considered out of time—her sex displeased her—her education was uninteresting to her mother's mind. It was only at intervals, and under particular circumstances, that Christobelle received any commendation, and it expired with the cause which elicited its birth. Christobelle felt assured her mother would never forgive the wound inflicted upon her ambition. She felt assured her mother would never forgive the dismissal of Lord Farnborough.

Sir John Wetheral decided upon quitting Fairlee as soon as his lady felt equal to undertake the fatigue of a journey; and he also expressed a wish that a twelvemonth should elapse ere Christobelle became the wife of Spottiswoode. "His daughter," he said, "was young, and a twelvemonth might effect a change in her mother's feelings. It was Christobelle's duty

to make some concessions to an offended parent, and twelvemonths would operate as a fair trial of the constancy of her own nature."

Christobelle submitted most willingly to this arrangement. The least wish of her father had ever been her rule of conduct, and his indulgence would have won obedience, had his wishes extended the period of the engagement. But Sir John required no painful sacrifices, no useless trials. Spottiswoode might visit Christobelle whenever his avocations enabled him to become a guest at Lidham, and he trusted time would soften Lady Wetheral's disappointed views. He dared not pronounce upon its certainty, but they had a right to hope the best.

The continued mortification which embittered Christobelle's repose, by Lady Wetheral's harsh mandate, at last induced Sir John to resolve upon his daughter quitting Fairlee. It was a painful and perpetual grievance to Christobelle, to know that her mother was ill, and confined to her apartments, yet that *she* was not suffered to alleviate her confinement, or attend her. It was a grief which the affectionate attentions of her lover could not control, and which her father's soothing presence did not lessen. Her appetite declined and her spirits fled. Spottis-

woode also became dispirited and uneasy in witnessing her regrets, and Sir John Wetheral, alarmed at his daughter's increasing depression, wrote to Mr. Boscawen to meet them at Edinburgh, and conduct Christobelle to his own home for a season.

It was judged, that absence from a scene so painful, and the society of Isabel, would cheer her spirits, and soften her present sorrow; while, under the protection of Mr. Boscawen, she might receive the visits of Sir John Spottiswoode, and move among the friends she loved, and whom she had not seen for some years. Spottiswoode would remain some time longer at Fairlee. and it might be, that his lengthened sojourn in the north would produce a favourable effect upon the invalid's mind. It might be, that the knowledge of her daughter's withdrawal would rouse her, and if any human being could amuse and soften a harsh determination in Lady Wetheral's soul, that being was the good and kind Spottiswoode.

Christobelle wandered each day with her lover through the scenes of their early walks, and if the exercise failed to bring the bloom into her cheek, yet she was happy while leaning on his arm, and listening to his hopes. They

spoke of Alverton in the rocky bower which she was so soon to quit. Christobelle looked upon the water, and she thought of the years of careless freedom in which she had wandered among those beautiful scenes with Janet for her sole companion. She thought of the Douglas Isle, where she had first seen Lord Farnborough, and the spot from whence she had waved her plaid at their parting. Christobelle thought of her gradually increasing passion for Spottiswoode—the hopes and fears of St. Mungo's Isle—the pangs of jealous feelings which she endured when Fanny Ponsonby engrossed the attention of him she loved:—she thought, too, of her present situation, the betrothed of Spottiswoode, yet the banished one from her mother's side. Would that mother, indeed, continue to drive her child from her presence, or might she yet receive her smile and hear her welcome? Should she be indeed the happy wife of Spottiswoode, and become, as he fondly styled her, the bright star of Alverton? Christobelle wept. Spottiswoode pressed her to his heart.

“My own Chrystal, this silent grief destroys me, for it is through me you suffer. Would to Heaven you were safe at Brierly with your friends, and that I was with you! I shall soon

follow you, for here I cannot remain without you. I should hear you sigh, and see your weeping figure in every spot where we have been together. I shall look like the ghost of departed Pleasure. You will leave me on Friday, my Chrystal."

"For a few days only, Spottiswoode."

"I shall know you are in kind protection, dearest. You will be with the best of men in Boscawen's company, and you love him as well as Isabel. Her children will amuse you. You will see the Pynsents. You will hardly have time to think of *me*, Chrystal."

"I will try to forget you sometimes; I wonder if I shall succeed."

"You have nephews and nieces to engross your attention; you will be joked by Mrs. Pynsent, Chrystal, for fancying your poor lover. Every body will crowd round you, to admire your loveliness, and wonder at your graceful figure; and yet I must not be there to witness it. What shall *I* do without you?"

The tears sprung to Chrystal's eyes; she endeavoured to disperse them, but they fell unbidden. Her mind was weakened by recent events. She clasped her hands, and exclaimed,—

“Oh, do not say you will suffer, Spottiswoode, by my absence.”

“No, no, my love,” he replied, with fond endearments, “I will not think of our little trial. You will go from me on Friday; but are you not my own betrothed bride, and are we not one in heart and hand? You will rejoice your friends, and be rejoiced in meeting them. I shall also rejoice, in the knowledge of your happiness. Our thoughts will meet often and often in our absence; and then, my Chrystal, we shall meet again in peace. I cannot and will not remain a week absent from you.”

Christobelle smiled again to think their separation was not eternal. How many attached hearts had been torn asunder, while they were mourning over the parting of a few short days! How many hearts had bid a long farewell, while they should meet again and be in peace! Again she leaned against her lover's shoulder, and her thoughts were of grateful thanks. She was not called to severe affliction—she was not beloved by a man whose birth or character was repugnant to her friends, and to whom her happiness was a source of discomfort and disgust. Even her mother had not deprecated Spottiswoode: his offence in her eyes arose from having won her

daughter from Lord Farnborough. Her father loved him, and approved her attachment. Yes, Christobelle had reason to be thankful to the hand which ministered so wisely for her happiness. Her mother would not always be harsh; surely she might in time be summoned into her presence! She would never be forgiven; she never *had* been loved; and the slight cord of affection was broken for ever between them: but they might meet without pain, she hoped, on her mother's part; and she herself would exert unceasing efforts to win her into complacency. Her mother *must* love Spottiswoode, when time should soften her remembrance of Lord Farnborough's attentions.

Christobelle spoke of Fanny Ponsonby to her companion, now that her heart was at rest; and alluded to her emotions in St. Mungo's Isle. Spottiswoode had, from the first hour of their introduction, discovered her predilection for Lord Farnborough.

"I could trace it, Chrystal, in the agitated and close attention she bestowed upon yourself, and in her anxiety to remove from your vicinity. I saw the distressed feelings of her heart, as she watched the engrossed attention of Farnborough at dinner: and I felt for her sufferings during

the singing. I felt for her and for myself at that moment, Chrystal, for I also fancied you approved his lordship."

"How could you think so, Spottiswoode?"

"Lady Wetheral's words were in my ears, Chrystal, and I had relinquished all hope for myself."

"What a day of misery it was to me!" Christobelle exclaimed, as she thought of all she had endured. "Fanny Ponsonby's feelings were all echoed by my own."

"It was a painful day to many, Chrystal; but to us it has proved a blessing, for it confessed our sentiments at once, and prepared the way for our mutual understanding. Had you not expressed disapprobation of Lord Farnborough, I had not dared to tell my feelings. Was it not a blessing, my love?"

"But poor Fanny Ponsonby, what will be *her* destiny?" Christobelle asked, as she returned the pressure of Spottiswoode's hand. "What will be her fate in her attachment?"

"Miss Ponsonby has sown her seed among thorns," he replied, with feeling, "and her heart must wrestle with its feelings, unless she becomes his wife. Lord Farnborough may turn to Miss Ponsonby, since you have rejected him, and she

may become the envied Lady Farnborough; but she will only sink into a neglected wife. He cannot make a woman happy."

"Oh! if I had seen him with my mother's eyes, and fallen a sacrifice!" observed Christobelle, with a shudder.

"I should have quitted England, Chrystal. I would not have witnessed your misery, or remained within hearing of your gradual decay. You could not long live under his harsh treatment, and I could not have borne to hear the world remark upon your pale cheek and faded form."

"How grateful I am! how happy I ought to be, Spottiswoode! When you come to see me at Brierly, and I do not suffer daily under my mother's angry prohibition, you will find me so changed and happy! When I think of Lord Farnborough, I turn to you with such grateful delight! Yes, Spottiswoode, I *will* be happy!"

And Christobelle exerted herself to be happy, even the few days which intervened between her expressed gratitude and her long farewell to Fairlee. She sat hour after hour upon the terrace, with her father and Spottiswoode, looking with deep interest upon the lake, the scene of all her pleasures, while she was happy in ignorance of a deep affection, and the scene of suffer-

ing during the stirring incidents which had awakened her heart to the strife of worldly sorrow. Lochleven was endeared to Christobelle by a thousand recollections, by the enjoyments of her young age, and by the happy hours passed by the side of Spottiswoode. She was going to the south, to a new scene that would be changed in its aspect; gayer, full of friends, and still blest by the society of him she loved. But would it be to her like the grand Lochleven? — that shelter from the world's cares? that spot where she had enjoyed such long tranquillity? Adieu for a long, long time, the cloud-capped mountains, the heather hills, the placid waters! farewell the islands on its bosom — the groves, the far Cona! Farewell the stirring breeze, the lonely Eilan na Corak—the repose, the grandeur of the shores of Lochleven!

Christobelle endured much, ere she set forth with her father from Fairlee. She bore her parting interview with Spottiswoode with great intrepidity; but she wept at her mother's obdurate determination not to see her before she quitted the parental roof. Sir John Wetheral soothed her as she gazed upon the lake, till it vanished from her aching sight: and he prophesied that her trial would not be lengthened

beyond her power to endure it. He spoke kindly and well to her overpowered spirit, of the sorrows which must accompany a progress through life, and of the consolation which attended a patient and praying spirit. He did not consider it right to allow Spottiswoode to accompany them, as her mother evinced such decided repugnance to the match ; but at Brierly, Christobelle might enjoy her lover's society in peace ; and he would accompany his lady to Wetheral as soon as she expressed a wish to set forth on the long journey. New scenes, new faces, and a new set of ideas would, he hoped, drive gloomy fancies from her mind, and bring comfort to all parties. She was on her road to Isabel, and with her and Boscawen she must enjoy the calm pleasures of domestic happiness. They would lead her to agreeable thoughts, and Spottiswoode would speedily add his society to the enjoyments of Brierly.

Such was Sir John Wetheral's reasoning, and its effects were apparent upon Christobelle's spirits. She gradually recovered cheerfulness under his indulgent soothings, and she could even admire the changing scenery which varied their route to Edinburgh. Mr. Boscawen was true to his appointment ; they found him at the

place of rendezvous, ready to conduct Christobelle to the county of her birth, and induct her once more into the domicile which had sheltered her so kindly years before.

Mr. Boscawen was surprised at her growth, and wondered at the girl who had glided into womanhood so rapidly. He thought her features bore a strong resemblance to her unfortunate sister Clara; but he politely assured her, her manner was entirely her own. She was no longer, he said, “the gay little half-grown girl, who had delighted to nurse her nephew under the mulberry tree at Brierly. She must be looked upon in a very different phase; and he feared the quiet haunts of Brierly would ring with the charms of the beautiful Miss Wetheral. He was pleased to think she possessed a protector whose claims would at once put an end to the fearful contention of furious rivals.” Christobelle’s blushes were the only answers she could give to the agreeable remarks of Mr. Boscawen.

Sir John Wetheral’s absence would not be of long continuance, therefore Christobelle did not sorrow much as she bade him adieu. She prayed him to speak of her to her mother, and to express her deepest regret at having incurred her displeasure. She prayed for her pardon, and that

they might meet again in reconciliation. She looked to her forgiveness with anxious desire, with a fervent and unceasing hope. She embraced her dear father, and bade him remember her kindly, affectionately, to the friend she had left at Fairlee, and then she gave her hand to Mr. Boscawen.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

How delightedly did the eye of Christobelle rest upon the matronly form of Isabel ! She was clasped in her arms, as she descended the steps of the chaise at Brierly.

“ Well, I never saw such a beautiful creature in my life ! My dear Christobelle, who would have thought you would turn out so very pretty ? My dear Mr. Boscawen, were you not surprised at Christobelle’s beauty, when you first saw her ? ”

“ I was not so overcome at your sister’s handsome face, as I am astonished at Isabel’s neglect of her long-absent husband,” replied Mr. Boscawen, smiling. Isabel flew towards him.

“ I can’t think how I came to be so wicked ; but, indeed, it was the sight of my sister’s face. My dear Boscawen, I have so longed for your return, and so have the children ! I was obliged to tell the dear things papa was gone a long way off, for some cakes and their pretty aunt, or they

would not have been comforted. I did not know what hour you would arrive, therefore I was wise enough not to say a word to them about it."

"They shall be summoned after dinner, Isabel. We are hungry travellers now, and a meal will be most gratefully welcomed."

"My love, ring the bell, and order it in now, if you please, while I escort my sister to her room. Follow me, dear Christobelle. Well, I declare I never saw such a change in a human being! You are tall and handsome, and have such beautiful ringlets! I shall certainly have ringlets too. I can't fancy you are the little, jumping Chrystal, who was dressed out so fine at my wedding, five or six years ago. Well — and don't you think *I* am changed?"

Isabel was changed. Her sylph-like figure had swelled into a stout form: her waist had increased materially in breadth, and her dress was rather disordered.

"The children are so playful, Chrystal, that my collars have always a ragged appearance; and corsets of any kind are so very painful, because I am getting large, that I never wear them. Boscawen, though, does not mind my appearance: he is not particular. He allows me to do just what I like, and I am so happy! Ah! do

you remember my geography days, Chrystal? How I detested that dreadful map of the world! I am determined my little Bell shall be happy and ignorant, as I was before her. She is called Bell after you, dear—not your long name, but simply Bell. I hope she will be as pretty as you; but what does it signify? Who can be happier than I am, with my broad waist and rumpled collars?”

The moment the servants had withdrawn, after dessert was placed upon the table, Isabel continued her happy prattle.

“I have so much to tell you, of one kind or the other, dear Bell, that I don’t know where to begin. What shall I tell first, my dear Boscawen? Oh! Bell, such things are whispered of Julia!—I don’t believe a word of them—not one word. However, you will find Anna Maria more French than ever, for the Count de Nolis has been staying every Christmas at Hatton, and Félicé does lay on the rouge terribly. It’s quite amusing to hear Tom Pynsent boast of his wife’s bloom, when it’s rouge all the time. I think I wrote you word, that odd Mrs. Hancock had a paralytic stroke some time ago?”

“No, indeed, Isabel, I never heard of it.”

“Didn’t you? Oh! it’s the case, I assure

you — her mouth is all on one side. Poor Miss Tabitha is not dead yet, Bell : I don't think she means to die at all ; and Mrs. Ward writes word, she finds fault with every thing, poor soul, that is said or done. Shall I ring for the darlings, my dear Boscawen ? I am sure Chrystal is dying to see her little boy, whom she nursed so carefully. Ring the bell twice, my love, and the little wild things will soon rush in."

"Do not give Tom wine, Isabel ; I have a dislike to children taking wine so early in life."

"No, my dear Boscawen, certainly not. I think, with you, that wine is very improper for children—but little Tom has such a winning way of coaxing his poor mother !"

The children soon burst into the room, and ran bounding round the table. Isabel was all triumphant pleasure. "Now, Charles—my dear Charles, go quietly to papa, and ask him how he does, and whether the cakes are come from merry Scotland. Ah, ha, Charley goes for his cakes. Tom, my beauty, come to mamma ; and Bell, go to your aunt—your new aunt, and admire her pretty hair."

Christobelle endeavoured to attract her little fat niece to her side, but she hid her face in Isabel's lap.

“ Oh, Bell, I’m ashamed of you !—your pretty aunt, too—oh, fie ! My dear Tommy, don’t touch mamma’s glass. No, no wine, Tommy—papa says no. A few strawberries, my dear little boy, and a biscuit, but no wine.”

Tommy, however, advanced his mother’s wine-glass to his lips, watching her countenance with a cunning glance.

“ Now, my little, good Tommy, mamma will be angry, very angry, if you do what she tells you not to do. Bell, my love, go to your aunt, like a good girl.”

Isabel took some pains to persuade her little girl to raise her head, but her appeals were useless. In the mean time, Tommy had silently quaffed the remainder of the contents of her glass. Mr. Boscawen rose, and took him from Isabel’s knee.

“ My dear Boscawen, what are you going to do with Tommy ? he is very good with me, my love.”

“ I am going to banish him, Isabel, for disobedience.”

“ Oh, my dear Boscawen, it was the least little drop of wine in the world ! it was scarcely a teaspoonful—pray don’t punish Tommy for that little drop, my love.”

“The disobedience was the same in the action, Isabel. I shall send him into the nursery. I shall take him there myself.”

Isabel’s eyes suffused, as Mr. Boscawen left the dining-room with the crying recreant Tommy. She turned to her sister.

“Oh ! Chrystal, was it not severe to carry away that dear child, for one drop of wine only ?”

“Boscawen was quite right, my dear Isabel.”

“Do you really think so ? Do you really think he was right to banish the darling child, when it was such a pretty, coaxing trick ? Did you see his little, cunning, dear eyes ?”

“Boscawen justly thinks, Isabel, that cunning habits and disobedience will increase, if it is not checked.”

“Oh ! I hope it won’t increase—dear child—I should be sorry to see him grow sly.” Mr. Boscawen returned. “My love, did Tommy cry ? Was he very much hurt—poor dear ? Did you leave him crying ?”

“My dear Isabel, you have brought this upon him, by not checking disobedience in the first instance. You have allowed the child twice to steal your wine.”

“My dear Boscawen — steal ! indeed, that sounds dreadful ! I hope my children will never

steal ! It was indeed my fault ! Poor, dear child !—I dare say he is crying dreadfully now. Let me beg for my child, Boscawen.”

“ Let him remain where he is, Isabel : he has been very naughty.”

“ But I have taught him to steal, and I ought to suffer for him, dear Boscawen. Let me go to my child, my love !” The tears stood in Isabel’s eyes, and Boscawen was still under their influence. He soothed his lady as fondly as when in earlier days she wept for the drooping ostrich feather.

“ My dear Isabel, when we retire into the drawing-room, your child shall come down again. Don’t weep, my love. I cannot wonder at your fondness, but he was very naughty. Wait a few moments, Isabel, and the child shall join us in the drawing-room. Don’t let me see you weep—stay, I will bring him down to you.”

Isabel smiled, and little Tommy was restored to her arms, as he entered the drawing-room. Mr. Boscawen felt he had acted unwisely by his child ; but how could he resist Isabel in tears ? Things were totally changed at Brierly. A tear from the bright blue eye of Isabel melted Boscawen’s best resolves, and operated against the excellence of his own system of education.

Isabel held the reins of government in her hands. She never argued with her husband—she never offered a word of opposition to his wishes—but she ruled by submission, and won his acquiescence by her tears and gentle self-upbraidings. Fortunately, her children possessed her own sweet disposition, which defied indulgence, or they might have suffered through Isabel's inability to check their budding faults. As it was, they loved her too well to persist in offending a parent so devoted; and it must have proved a very serious offence, ere the light-hearted Isabel could lament conduct which was ever palliated by her affectionate heart. She was indeed the happiest of wives and mothers.

Mr. Boscawen and Christobelle resumed their occupations instinctively, as if years had not intervened since they last walked and read together at Brierly. Isabel was delighted.

“ Ah, there you go again! — read, read, talk, talk, all day long. I like to hear you argue, when I have time to devote to you both; but the children require so much attention, and the dear little things love to be with me so often, that dear Boscawen has been a great deal alone, haven't you, Boscawen? It is such a pleasure to have

you here, Chrystal—my poor, dear husband won't have to endure my ignorance."

"Who says my Isabel is ignorant?" said Mr. Boscawen, patting his lady's shoulder affectionately.

"Yes, dear Boscawen, I am very ignorant, and very unfit for you; but I do very well to play with the darlings, and superintend every thing but their education—*that* you will do, except for poor little Bell: let her be happy and ignorant, Boscawen. If she is half as happy as her mother, she will not require knowledge — only her husband and children. I never wish for any thing beyond you and them." Isabel cast an upward and affectionate look at Boscawen, who bent his long figure to kiss his laughing wife.

Mr. Boscawen told Christobelle he had engaged to take her for a day or two to Hatton. The Pynsents were very anxious to see her, and Mrs. Pynsent had made it a point with him to bring the "tall, gawky, good-looking girl" to her, as soon as she had rested a few days at Brierly. The Charles Spottiswoodes, also, were wishing to see her again, to contemplate the improvement which five years must have effected in her appearance. The name of Spottiswoode brought blushes into the face of Christobelle.

“My dear Bell,” exclaimed Isabel, with laughing delight, “how droll it is to think you have a lover; when I saw you last, you were such a bit of a girl! Sir John Spottiswoode is just the man I would have chosen for you—just the very person I should have singled out—is he not, Boscawen?—just the sort of man, with curling dark hair and high forehead, that you ought to like, dear Chrystal!”

“*I* had not dark curling hair, Isabel?” said Boscawen, smiling—“I had not a high forehead, had I?”

“My dear Boscawen, your hair was always dreadfully wiry, and I thought you very plain, but I liked you for all that, you know.”

“Then why *ought* Chrystal to choose and love such things, my Isabel?”

“Ah! I dare say I am talking nonsense again,” cried the humble Isabel, “for I should really recommend no one who does not resemble you, dear Boscawen. I should advise every woman to wait till they could find a kind, dear man, like yourself, and then they would not care about wiry hair, or . . .” Isabel hesitated and coloured.

“Say on, Isabel.” Mr. Boscawen looked amused.

“I was going to say, they would not mind

great long legs. Don't be angry, my love, with me."

Mr. Boscawen laughed. "You see, Isabel, the triumph of good sense over mere personal advantages. You cannot be ignorant, since you chose me in spite of my deficiencies. I hope all your young acquaintance may exhibit your indifference to mere good looks. Miss Wetheral, when shall we visit Hatton? Isabel, will you join the party?"

"I wish I could drive over with you, my love; but Charly is cutting a double-tooth, and I think little Bell is not quite well. I think I cannot leave my little ones two days, Boscawen!"

"Then Chrystal and myself will depart to-morrow for Hatton," said Boscawen, smiling, with gratified feelings, at his wife's love of her home and her little ones.

"Yes, Bell will amuse you, dear Boscawen, and you will not miss *me*. You can talk away upon history and the arts and sciences, and enjoy the novelty of a clever companion, for once. I am only fit to nurse my children."

"You are only fit to be a very excellent creature, and to be my dear little roundabout wife," exclaimed Boscawen; and Isabel looked so happy! It was delightful to witness the joyous expression

which revelled in her looks, whenever she spoke with her husband and children. It was such a contrast to the Isabel whom Christobelle remembered, low-spirited, in her dressing-room at Wetheral, pining over “Burnet’s Reformation!” It was such a contrast to the Isabel who watched in alarm the fond, but searching, glance of her excellent, elderly husband!—Christobelle told her so, when they were alone. She laughed.

“I remember, Bell, how frightened I used to be, and there was no cause for it! Boscawen was always kind, only I was so unwilling to receive improvement, and then I fancied his anxiety was annoying. When Miss Tabitha left Brierly, every thing was comfortable to me; for then, you know, there was no one to point out my faults. But, Chrystal, tell me now all about John Spottiswoode. Boscawen told me not to be curious, but I am *very* curious. I want to know how it all began, and why mamma is so foolish about Lord Farnborough.”

Christobelle recapitulated her story to Isabel, who wondered, and was pleased, and wept, by turns, as her sister recounted all her sufferings. She clasped her arms round Christobelle.

“Never mind, Chrystal, never mind; and every thing will end as it should do. Every

body knows mamma's matches have turned out shockingly; and John Spottiswoode is so loved by all his relations, so good to his mother and sister, that you are fortunate in attracting him; but you are so very handsome, dear Chrystal, you would attract every one, high and low. People are now scandalizing poor Julia, and pointing at her and Colonel Neville; but I will never believe that Julia would do wrong, though I dare say she is very unhappy, poor dear girl."

"What does Boscawen think, Isabel?"

"Oh, Boscawen never thought *that* match would answer. He did not like the Dowager's manners and character; and he said to me, at Julia's wedding, that if my sister fell from her high estate, the two mothers would answer for it hereafter. He said, too, that Julia was the victim of two machinating Machiavels. Of course, he meant mamma and the Dowager. Lord Selgrave was always disliked as a cruel, disagreeable boy, I hear; so he would have made you a sad husband, in spite of being Earl of Farnborough, and a trumpery Duke in expectancy."

Isabel's remarks only corroborated the observations of Spottiswoode, and Christobelle believed herself indeed saved from ruin, though

she paid a severe penalty for her escape, in the angry prohibition of her mother's disappointed views. Her present pain, she felt assured, was far more bearable than the misery of an unhappy matrimony ; and she was grateful beyond expression to know that she was given to a man, so loved and so well appreciated as Spottiswoode was, among her nearest friends. Their approbation must be balm to her heart ; and, when her mother heard how all lips concurred to praise him, would she continue her ungenerous dislike to her presence ? Would she persist in holding back her consent, and still pertinaciously revenge upon her head her dismissal of a man so little respected as Lord Farnborough ? Christobelle hoped not in fear and trembling ; she *would* hope. As her dear father observed, she had a right to hope that her prayers would be heard and answered, if she persevered in the path of principle.

Christobelle's spirits were considerably improved, by viewing the happy lot of Isabel, in the enjoyment of those tranquil domestic scenes which were so adapted to her taste and nature. In Mr. Boscawen, she met the highly-informed mind which imparted knowledge with a flow so gentle, that it did not startle or confound the listening neophyte. His was a mind which fer-

tilized as it stole along, improving all, and delighting every ear, but the ear of Isabel. To her the stream of his intellect flowed by, without a wish to understand, or kindle under its influence, one spark of sympathetic fire. Yet she gloried in her husband, and their life was peaceful and happy.

It is temper which creates the bliss of home, or disturbs its comfort. It is not in the collision of intellect, that domestic peace loves to nestle. Her home is in the forbearing nature—in the yielding spirit—in the calm pleasures of a mild disposition, anxious to give and receive happiness. In the sweet humility of Isabel, and in the indulgent forbearance of Boscawen, peace dwelt undisturbed by rival animosity; and she did not suffer those alarms which chase her timid presence from the hearth of the contentious, and from the bosom of the envious. Such was the blessed comfort and true charm of Brierly.

Isabel was all bustle and kindness, as her husband and sister prepared to depart for Hatton. “Had dear Boscawen forgotten his shaving-apparatus?—his tooth-brush? Was he sure he had his eye-glass? She hoped they would return very soon; but, at any rate, till they made their appearance again, she should live in the

nursery. Dear Boscawen was to be sure and remember every thing that was said of Chrystal, for she was sure every one would admire her pretty face ; and Chrystal was particularly to be amused with Tom Pynsent's remarks upon Anna Maria's borrowed bloom. Where was Charly and Bell ? They had begged to ride as far as the Lodges, and she would put on her hat and meet them."

Isabel ran off to the nursery, and returned with her three children. Tommy was a soldier, and a drum was appended to his neck. Charly had a new fiddle in his hand, and little Bell was sorted with a trumpet, that she might approach as nearly as possible to her brother's style of amusements. Isabel placed them in the carriage. "Now, Charly and Tommy, don't make a great noise ; and don't snatch your sister's trumpet from her, my loves. Papa will put you out at the Lodge, and mamma will be ready to take you. Charly, don't squeeze your aunt's pretty dress ; and, Bell, my love, don't push back your bonnet—I don't like to see little girls push back their bonnet. Chrystal, give my love to every body, and say I could not leave the little ones ; I should have done nothing but think of them.

My dear Boscawen, come back very soon ; and, Chrystal, don't stay long."

" Any thing more, Isabel ?" demanded Boscawen. " Any thing about curled heads and high foreheads ?"

" Ah, you are laughing at me, now, wicked man ! I believe I talk a great deal of nonsense, but little Bell will not have her mother's infirmities, I hope."

" I hope she will possess all of them," replied Boscawen, " and only inherit half her mother's sweet temper. She will then have enough to raise my pride."

Isabel laughed gaily, and blushed at her husband's energetic speech ; but she kissed her hand, with such a happy expression of countenance, as they drove from the door ! How pleasing was the sight, and how it tended to raise the spirits of Christobelle !

The children did not make more noise than usual, as they drove to the Lodge ; and little Bell only lost her trumpet and her temper once, during the transit. They were then deposited with the Lodge-keeper till their mamma should join them, and Mr. Boscawen proceeded on his journey. They stopped to change horses at Bridgnorth, and, as they remained some minutes at

the Crown, Christobelle remembered the appearance of Thompson, at her first visit there, and the cause of her sudden recal home. It was after the luckless elopement of Clara, that she was hurried to Wetheral, to be the companion of her mother, under circumstances most annoying to herself, connected with the very marriage she had promoted so anxiously. Christobelle was now herself the object of her anger, for declining to enter into an engagement, hateful to her heart and principles! How and when would her mother's soul be divested of its ambitious worldly anxieties?

Christobelle's reception at Hatton was gratifying to her feelings in the highest degree. She was surrounded by affectionate greetings and congratulations. Mrs. Pynsent wrung her hand with kind violence.

"Hollo, Miss Bell, so we have got you back again, and I won't ask where Sir Jacky is, because and because. Got your blushes still, Miss Bell! So much the better — and I'll be bound you have brought back your good heart. No, not your heart, but your good temper. Here, Bobby, come and look at our new beauty. I tell you what, Miss Bell, you are a finer girl than any of your sisters; not even that unfortu-

nate, poor Lady Kerrison came up to you in good looks."

"Come, come, I'll match my little wife with the best of you," exclaimed Tom, more good-humoured, more red-faced than ever. "I'll match my little wife's bloom even against the handsome 'Bell.' Bell's fine colour comes and fades away again in an instant; but Anna Maria's cherry cheeks are everlasting. Look at them!" Tom Pynsent dragged his laughing wife before Christobelle.

"Ay, ay," replied Mrs. Pynsent, winking her eye, "we know Anna Maria's bloom is the right sort—renewable at pleasure. Look at Bobby, screwing up his eyes. — What's the matter, Bobby?"

Mr. Pynsent never did, and never could appear to advantage, under the ridicule which his lady's address always threw around him; but he did not observe the *de haut en bas* manner, or else long custom had taken away all feeling upon the extraordinary nature of her remarks. Probably he had long felt assured the evil was irremediable. His own manner was very courteous, but Mr. Pynsent was not a man of many words. He surrendered all speech quietly into the hands of his lady, and contented himself

with silently listening to the remarks of others, without adventuring his own. Mr. Pynsent took no notice of her question.

“What’s the matter, Bobby?” repeated Mrs. Pynsent. “Can’t you admire Miss Bell, without screwing up your poor old pair of greys? It’s a fair face to look upon, isn’t it, after gazing upon poor Sal. Miss Bell, poor Sally Hancock is in a precious pickle.”

“I heard of it from Isabel.”

“You never saw such a poor thing!—all over with Sal, Miss Bell; but the poor creature is so cast down! She has a room here now, to be amused by the children, and watch their antics; and, luckily, you know, she can’t speak plain, to put bad words in their mouths. Poor Sally! I could not let her remain at Lea, in that state; and I think she is very comfortable here with the children and Bobby.”

“Where are the children? Where is Tom, and where is Moll and Bab?” asked Tom Pynsent. “Bell must see the children—Bell will want to see the children—I thought I heard them screaming just now, somewhere.”

“They were fighting over a brush just now in the second hall,” replied his mother, “and they nearly killed the baby. I expected the poor

little thing would have got a broken head in the scuffle, but he fought like a fury, and sent his fist into Moll's eye."

"They do fight dreadfully," observed Anna Maria.

"Let them alone, I won't have them checked," cried their grandmother; "when they have had thumps enough, they will be quiet. Moll is worse than the baby; but their spirits are so high, I won't have them cowed."

"Bell," said Tom Pynsent, with a tone and look of honest pride, "you have pretty scamps for your relations. Tom rides a Shetland after the hounds, and Moll runs up a tree like a young squirrel. Bab and the baby are improving, too, by their example. Tally ho! I hear them!" he ran to the door, and opened it. "Tally ho, there! Tom and Moll, bring the litter this way!"

The four children burst into the drawing-room like a pack of hounds, and the baby, a stout child of a year old toddling in, he fell down, and the others ran over him. Tom Pynsent caught up the sturdy boy.

"Don't give tongue, you young rascal, but fight 'em, Bill — here, double your fists at them all."

The child mechanically closed his little fists, and his father placed him before Miss Bab.

“Battle her well, Bill, rattle her.”

The child, who had not yet cast his cap, dealt a blow at his sister, which Miss Bab returned by knocking him down. The child did not attempt to cry at the blow, but, rising from the floor, he again doubled his infantine fists for the battle. Tom Pynsent was delighted.

“Well done, Bill, well done, my sharp lad! Come, that’s enough at a time! Live to fight another day, Bill!”

“Come to your granny, my sharpshooter,” cried Mrs. Pynsent; “I have something in my pocket for stout-hearted men!”

Billy toddled to his grandmother, who drew a box of sugarplums from her capacious pocket, and rewarded his prowess by a shower of sweets. Tom and Moll were likewise engaged in a controversy, which threatened to end in an engagement. They were quarrelling over Christobelle’s parasol, Moll demanding it to walk with, and be a lady, like aunt Bell, while Tom insisted upon shouldering it like a bayonet, as the Count de Nolis had taught him. The dispute ran very high.

“Tom, dear, don’t let the children fight,”

said Anna Maria, as she examined the make and material of her sister's silk pelisse, "they have been fighting all day."

"Aunt Bell, mayn't I have it?" screamed little Moll, as she struggled with her brother for the possession of the parasol.

"I will have it first!" roared Tom, dragging the handle from her grasp.

Mr. Boscawen extricated the parasol from their hands, and kept possession of it during their stay in the drawing-room, but no one else attempted to release Christobelle's property from the struggle. Tom Pynsent called their attention from their defeat.

"Now, Tom, catch papa if you can, and show your aunt whether your legs are as stout as your lungs. Moll! Bab! Bill! now for it!"

The drawing-room became a scene of dreadful confusion. Tom Pynsent, delighted to show off his children, and always the foremost to give them pleasure, threaded the mazes of the tables and chairs, while the little ones raced screaming and hallooing after him. Mr. Boscawen sought a retreat from their deafening shouts by quitting the room, and even Anna Maria half closed her eyes, as she assured her sister they made really more noise that day than ever, in compliment,

she supposed, to her arrival. Mrs. Pynsent sat with the box of sugarplums on her lap, enjoying the din of voices, and inciting them forward, by clapping her hands and exclaiming:—"Hurrah, my lads and lasses, catch him! Round the chair, Bill!—down you go—up again—well done, my hearty! Halloo there, Moll! Bab, you be hanged!" Mr. Pynsent looked overpowered, but he said nothing.

Such were the sports of Hatton. The commotion continued till both parties, the chaser and the chased, became wearied with their exertions, and then the children wished to go and ride their rocking-horses. Mrs. Pynsent loaded them with sweetmeats and good advice, as she dismissed each from her presence.

"I say, you young Tommy, don't suck your fingers, but look to that poor morsel of a Bill, and don't run over him. If he falls, pick him up, and wipe his nose, like a little gentleman. Here, my Moll in the wad, look at your torn frock, and don't thump Bab upon the back so hard. Never mind, Bab, here's six sugarplums for that thump, and you must give it Moll well, to-morrow. What, Bill, old boy! you must have sugarplums, too, must you? There then, and

toddle after them, my sharpshooter. Go all of you to old aunt Hancock."

When the children were gone, Christobelle had time to give her attention to Anna Maria. The elegance of Miss Wetheral had in a great degree lost its tone, but Mrs. Tom Pynsent was fashionably French still in her dress and appearance. Rouging very highly gave an unnatural brilliance to her eyes, and her figure had become enlarged, though not in the same proportion with Isabel : Christobelle thought her handsome and striking, but she was not the pale, still, and interestingly elegant woman, who had volunteered her affections to the stout, good-looking, red-faced Tom Pynsent. Many might have considered Anna Maria improved by the change which had gradually taken place in her appearance ; but Christobelle had admired her so greatly in her more youthful days, that her eye could not reconcile itself to her present style. There was, she thought, something too garish in the deeply-rouged cheek and glittering eye of her sister.

Her affection for her husband was quite unchanged : she still spoke of him with powerful affection, and dilated upon his unvaried kindness and good temper with vivacity. During

Christobelle's long absence, Tom had never changed towards her in indulgence and interest. Mrs. Pynsent was all that could be desired in a mother-in-law, for her warm heart never fancied she could do enough for those she loved ; and poor Mr. Pynsent was in nobody's way. Anna Maria doted upon her children, and she confessed herself to be "the happiest woman in the world, when the children did not fight, but they certainly did fight furiously, and Tom and his mother encouraged it."

Christobelle asked after the health of Félicé.

"Oh, Félicé is very well, but she cannot comprehend a word of English, stupid girl, and I am losing my French. Every body borrows Félicé, and she travels all round the county before any public meeting takes place. Félicé is always borrowed by Pen Spottiswoode before the races, and, when she appears, you would declare her clothes were cut out by the Lidham cook, instead of Félicé. Pen never dressed well, you know, Bell."

"Miss Bell," cried Mrs. Pynsent, from a distant corner of the drawing-room, "have you heard any tidings from Bedinfield ? because there is a rod in pickle for somebody in that quarter. Your poor sister has made a sorry concern of

that grand match, which was to her so desirable. Not much better a business than Lady Kerri-son's! Report is saying the deuce and all of poor Miss Julia and that colonel. That dowager never was liked by any one, for her acquaintance was always a blight upon the poor soul who made it."

Christobelle asked if her sister had been in Shropshire, since their removal into Scotland.

"No, my dear; Lady Ennismore has never suffered her son to bring your sister into Shropshire, since her return to England. She has her own reasons for it. I know what I could call her, only I have promised Sally Hancock never to use large words, now her own mouth is stopped, poor thing! If your sister elopes with that moustache fellow, it will be the fault of those who married her to such a poor creature as my lord."

"Have you heard any thing in *particular* about Julia, my dear Anna Maria?" asked Christobelle, in a low voice.

"Reports only," was her reply, "but they begin to assume a form. There are very strange reports about Colonel Neville, but we do not hear from Julia; she has never written to me since I went to the altar with her, and I was

tired with writing unanswered letters. Papa told us when he returned with you from Bedinfield, that it was vain to hope she would ever be withdrawn from the dowager; and if she did discover treachery, it would only make her wretched, without a hope of escape. Lord Ennismore is devoted to his mother, and Julia would suffer, he thought, by any complaints on her side. We hear Lord Ennismore is in a poor way, but we know nothing: Julia might as well be in another hemisphere, since we neither meet nor correspond. How miserably Clara and Julia have been in their choice, Bell! I cannot be too thankful I won my dear Tom at last."

"I say, Miss Bell," cried Mrs. Pynsent from her corner, where she sat knitting, "I say, Miss Bell, when does Sir Jacky return to us?" Anna Maria smiled at her sister's confusion. Christobelle hesitated for a moment to reply.

"Miss Bell, Sir Jacky is a great favourite of mine, and I want to hear a little about him. Come here, Miss Bell, come nearer to me, I want to ask a question."

Christobelle approached Mrs. Pynsent, amused at the idea of her intended jokes, which could not offend, since only Anna Maria was now present. The two gentlemen had sought for Mr.

Boscawen when the children dispersed. She, therefore, seated herself near her.

“What have you to say to me, Mrs. Pynsent, that is not kind and pleasant at all times?”

“I have this to say,” she replied, with a seriousness foreign to her usual manner, “I have to say, that, much as I liked you as a girl, I love you far better than ever, *now*, because you had the sense to refuse a young coroneted rascal some time ago, and choose a man who will be a jewel to you. You showed sense and spirit in refusing to be manœuvred into wickedness, to lead the abominable life which two of your sisters have been doomed to suffer; and you showed a right woman’s warm heart, in taking a man whom I like and respect next to my own Tom for comeliness and godliness. When a young woman marries such a tight lad as Jacky Spottiswoode, she knows she will be happy to the day of her death, and be respected among her friends. Now, Miss Bell, what do you say to that?”

Christobelle said nothing. Tears filled her eyes, and spoke volumes for her. She was affected with the idea that all her friends, except *one*, approved the connexion she was about to form. Mrs. Pynsent’s remarks affected her still

more, because they were spoken with unusual quietness of manner and phrase, and her words ever came from the fountain of her heart in all truth and sincerity. She spoke, too, the sentiments of those around her; Christobelle judged so, by Mrs. Pynsent assuring her of the respect of her friends. It was a deep gratification to think her attachment was sanctioned by those she loved and honoured; and it was a grateful pride to feel assured the finger of scorn or ridicule had never pointed observations offensive to the high character of her beloved Spottiswoode. Was it to be wondered at that she sat silent by the side of Mrs. Pynsent, enjoying feelings too blessed for utterance? She saw her agitation, and forbore to notice it; but Mrs. Pynsent was not wanting in real delicacy to those who did not offend her notions of right; and to Christobelle she had ever shown peculiar kindness. She addressed her daughter.

“I say, Anna Maria, we’ll have old Sally Hancock to spend the evening with us, to compliment Miss Bell. It’s all over with Sal now, so she won’t shock the company. You need not be afraid of Sally Hancock any more, for she can’t speak, if she was dying for it. I can see her poor eyes glare up sometimes; you won’t mind

Sally Hancock. She likes to watch the children, and when they don't pull her crutch from her, they are great friends. Moll and Bab often imitate her walk, but Sally Hancock only laughs at them."

"I wish the children would not fight so much," remarked Anna Maria.

"Fiddle diddle! my Tom fought Pen Spotiswoode like a dragon when he was their age, and he is all the better for it. I don't like to keep down their spirits. How would our little Moll climb the sycamore, if she hadn't a fearless spirit? Well, look at Bobby, between those two great monsters upon the lawn! Boscawen looks such a long animal, compared with Bobby. Don't you think Bobby is worn into half a goose, Miss Bell? He looks trussed for the spit."

"I think Mr. Pynsent looking very well — better than your letters insinuated, Mrs. Pynsent."

"Poor Bobby! no, he's nothing better than half a goose now; but Sally Hancock and myself remember him a smart lad. There goes the half-hour bell!"

"Come, then, Bell, we will depart, for my toilette is a long affair," said her sister, rising.

"I say," called Mrs. Pynsent, as they left the

room, "I say, Anna Maria, don't let Bell into the secrets of the prison-house."

"Oh! Bell knows all about *that*!" replied the laughing Anna Maria. "Tom is the only person who does not know my secret. Every body knows I only rouge to please Tom."

CHAPTER XXIX.

Hatton was by no means so agreeable a *séjour* to Christobelle as in former days. The Pynsents were never happy without the four unruly children constantly in their sight; and their amusements were the chief subjects under consideration. The children scrambled over the table to snatch at the dessert; they were admitted in the drawing-room at all hours, and in every phase of dirt and fighting; they were to drag heavy weights round the room at pleasure, and every one made themselves a party in their quarrels.

Mrs. Pynsent generally advocated the part of the baby, whom she designated “that proper divil of a Bill,” with a hearty vehemence which increased the uproar and confusion; while her son, with stentorian voice, argued in favour of the girls. Anna Maria rarely interfered in the

alarum which occurred. She sat smiling at the fray, only her distress was occasionally awakened by the length and frequency of the battles, and her taste was offended at intervals, by the disagreeable abbreviation of their names. She “wished her Mary could be called by her right name, and not Moll. She would give any thing they would call the baby Willy, instead of that horrid ‘Bill;’ and as to Bab, it was a shocking word; but Bab she would be called for ever. Barbara was too long a word for her mother and Tom to pronounce. Sometimes she fancied their noise must be disagreeable to their guests, but Tom loved to have the little things round him.”

The Pynsents were, therefore, the happiest people possible in themselves; but it was extremely disagreeable. Every body must think Hatton a very disagreeable place to stay at now; and Christobelle was glad to escape with Mr. Boscawen the following day to Lidham. She had little difficulty in privately persuading him to curtail their intended stay at Hatton, and proceed to the Spottiswoodes. He, as well as Christobelle, felt the utter hopelessness of procuring a peaceful moment, where every thought and feeling was absorbed in four remarkably noisy children. How very different to the Hatton of other days,

when she enjoyed the society of her sister undisturbed, and spent there such happy hours of her life ! It was there, too, she met first the man whom she hoped to make happy for long years of futurity.

Christobelle thought they should never be allowed to enter the carriage when it drew up to the door. The children were delighted to get in and out, and Tom particularly amused himself with putting up the steps and throwing them down again with as much noise as the leather would allow. Tom Pynsent detained Christobelle in the hall, to enable her to enjoy a scene which he considered most delectable ; and Mrs. Pynsent uttered exclamations of delight, as she watched the baby trying with all its might to imitate his companions.

“ I say, Tom, do look at that divil of a Bill, trying to clamber into the carriage ; did you ever see such a young dog ? Moll, put Bill into the carriage. Let my sharpshooter take his turn. Moll, you’ll break his leg ! ”

The “ sharpshooter ” was handed into the carriage by the butler, for “ Moll ” could not lift the scrambling child, and they all began jumping upon the seat till a battle commenced, through the instrumentality of Bab, who had pulled Tom’s

hair rather too roughly. The screams of Tom were echoed by the baby; and Bab cried violently at her own ferocity. Tom Pynsent and their grandmother both spoke at once, in their loudest key.

“Halloo there, you young ones. Bill, what are you at, all of you? Hand out that young dog,” cried Mrs. Pynsent.

“What the devil are you all roaring at? Moll, what’s the matter?” called out Tom Pynsent.

“Pa, Bab pulled Tom’s hair!” screamed Miss Mary, alias Moll. Mrs. Pynsent’s words now became confounded with those of her son.

“What the devil!—don’t fight there, you rascals!—Hand out Bill, James; they’ll kill that poor Bill.—Here, Tom, never mind your hair: bring some cakes here, Dick, to stop this row.—Hand out that Bill thing, Thomas, he’s on his head.—They’re murdering Bill!”

“I declare my children will fight themselves to death,” said Anna Maria, who took no part in the affair, “I am sure they will kill each other. Tom, dear, don’t let the children fight so.”

Mr. Boscawen took advantage of the moment when the carriage was emptied of its noisy contents, and hurried Christobelle into it. She

was too willing to quit the uproar of Hatton not to rejoice at his polite movement, and both were glad to remain silent for some time after they had quitted its grounds.

“I fancied,” said Mr. Boscawen, after a long pause, “that Isabel spoiled her children, till I have now compared them with their cousins. I shall remain satisfied in future that they are not more vivacious than healthy children should be.”

“It is altogether a different form of government at Brierly. You are monarch, though an indulgent one; but it is a frightful democracy at Hatton.”

“I shall keep my young ones out of the infection,” he observed; “for though Mary and Barbara may have hearts as kindly affectioned as their grandmother, those manners are deplorable. I should be sorry to see my little Bell become coarse and loud in her way of speaking.”

“What could be the cause of the Miss Wycherlys imbibing such manners, in the first instance?” asked Christobelle.

“Old Wycherly was a broker,” replied Boscawen; “and he retired to Lidham with an immense fortune, and a young wife whose connections were far superior to his own. Mrs. Wy-

cherly did not live many years, and the daughters were allowed to educate themselves, and to act, in every respect, as seemed good in their own eyes. They were always the subject of conversation; and, though they never were suspected of any thing more reprehensible than extreme wildness, their conduct subjected them to many extraordinary scenes, and much objectionable remark. Captain Hancock drank, I believe, to drown care, and Mrs. Hancock was infinitely the worst of the two. How the young ladies learned their swearing propensities, I cannot tell; but I have heard that their brother Wycherly led them into very exceptionable society in his youthful days. They were an extraordinary trio. No one, however, spoke ill of them."

"They had great good nature, I suppose."

"They had great wealth, Bell, or they never could have held any position in society. Four hundred thousand pounds drew the first gentlemen in the county to Lidham."

Christobelle chatted till the Lidham woods rose in sight, and then she became silent. Every thing connected with the name of Spottiswoode held a powerful interest in her heart, and concentrated her thoughts upon himself. She had heard from him once since her arrival at Brierly,

and then he spoke so cheerlessly of her mother's spirits, that he lingered to assist and console her father. He knew, he said, that he was giving her pleasure by attending upon her father, and he hoped so much from his assiduities! Dear Spottiswoode, how much more sanguinely than herself did he expect a change in her mother's sentiments!

As the carriage drove through the lodges, a gentleman on horseback galloped towards them. "Here comes Charles full of news," said Boscawen; "and he is riding fast, I suppose, to carry it fresh into Shrewsbury. A little news is a passport among one's neighbours."

Christobelle bent forward to observe Charles Spottiswoode; but no, it was *not* Charles Spottiswoode. Her heart beat thickly, and her eyes strained to gaze. She knew the horseman from afar: she knew the air, the figure, and the style of riding, well. Was her lover winging his way to her? — was he thinking of Brierly, and one there who loved him better than herself? Christobelle caught her brother's hand. "Boscawen, it is not him, it is *John* Spottiswoode! what brings him so soon from Fairlee?"

"God bless me!" cried Boscawen, "it is indeed our friend from the north, and I must stop

him, or he will never condescend to look at us.” He put his head out of the carriage-window, and waved his hand: Sir John Spottiswoode heeded not the movement. He was riding rapidly by, and would have passed with a slight inclination of the head, had not Christobelle caught his eye. His handsome face glowed with surprise and delight, while her own feelings, so very suddenly called into action, completely took away her powers of speech. She could only hold out her hand, as he checked his horse, and wheeled round to the window, but it was pressed so fondly—and he looked so bright and happy!

“Why, Spottiswoode, what fair lady are you scampering after, that you nearly passed by *us*?” exclaimed Boscawen, shaking him by the hand.

“Never mind, I am going to turn back with you. Indeed, I was galloping to Shrewsbury, to get upon the coach for Brierly. I only arrived this morning.”

“My *mother*, Spottiswoode,” uttered Christobelle, in alarm—“how is my mother?”

“On her road to Wetheral, by short stages; I am but their *avant courier*, Chrystal. I have brought a letter for you. You will now, perhaps, offer me a seat in your carriage to Brierly,

when you return. My brother said nothing about your visit—do they expect you?”

“No, I am making a tour with my young sister—but let us reach Lidham before we enter into particulars.”

The carriage moved on, and Spottiswoode rode by its side. How unexpected was this meeting, and how busy were Christobelle's thoughts, conjecturing upon the motive of her mother's early journey! If it had but a happy reference towards herself, how would her cup of joy be filled! but, no, her mother never forgave an offence like hers!

Christobelle was prepared to meet astonishment at Lidham, as she had found it every where else, since her return into Shropshire, and she was not deceived. Mrs. Charles Spottiswoode held her from her at arm's length, as she examined her person and growth.

“My dear little Bell, is this really and truly yourself? I have heard of you from persons whom I did not consider altogether unprejudiced in their accounts; but, indeed, I now see it with my own eyes! John, you have not said half enough of this creature. I recognise her eyes—those large eyes—but these ringlets—that

figure—no, John, upon my honour, you did not do her justice!”

Spottiswoode stood by Christobelle, and his eyes flashed a proud satisfaction at the remarks of his sister-in-law.

“But, Charles, Charles,” she continued, “tell me if *you* could recognise Bell Wetheral in this grand creature! tell me if it is not a vision, for I cannot think I really see the prim little Bell, always poring over books, and diving out of her father’s study with a little shock head, like my terrier Tarter!”

“Yes, I recognise Miss Wetheral,” answered Mr. Spottiswoode, “for I see the same expression of good-humour, and the same fine outline, which gave such promise of what we behold. Miss Wetheral, you are most welcome to Lidham.”

“By the Lord Harry!” cried Mr. Wycherly, emerging from his own room in spectacles, “here’s a *posse comitatus*! Well, I’m come to welcome the new filly myself. How d’ye do, Miss Wetheral?—how d’ye do, ma’am? God help us, how the young people grow! They run us down, Mr. Boscawen! You are come to stay a week—a month with us, I hope? Come in, come in, all of you!” They entered the sitting-room, and the conversation was general for a short time,

till Mrs. Spottiswoode suddenly turned to Christobelle.

“My dear Bell, I know what your anxiety must be, to hear of those whom John has left behind. I see, by the expression of those large eyes, that you are longing to hear news of Fairlee. Come with me, and I give John alone leave to follow us. We will adjourn into the library. I can quite understand your feelings. John, you may follow us with your letters.”

Mrs. Spottiswoode led Christobelle into the library, and there she again embraced her. The first reception, she said, belonged to Miss Wetheral, but now she embraced her future relation—the bride of her excellent John—the brother beloved by all! She was embracing now the future Lady Spottiswoode. Christobelle returned her embrace with fervent pleasure. She said her heart rejoiced in the congratulations of her friends, and in the language of praise which always accompanied the mention of Spottiswoode’s name. She only hoped—and she expressed the hope with tears—that her mother would in time see Spottiswoode with the eyes of all who knew his great worth; that she would in time receive him as a dear son, and remove the only impediment to her happiness, by extending the hand of friendship towards him, and her par-

don towards herself. Mrs. Spottiswoode hoped all things.

“My dear Chrystal — which, by the by, is a prettier designation than Bell—there is bitter in every cup. Rest happy in the knowledge that Lady Wetheral’s offended feelings proceed from disappointed views, and not from unworthiness in the object. It must always be painful to displease a parent, but it cannot, in this particular case, strike deep into your happiness. Your excellent father long wished for the match—he confessed it to John. Come in !” A gentle tap at the door was heard, and Spottiswoode entered.

“You allowed me to follow you—am I welcome now ?”

“Ever welcome, wherever you appear, John ; and most welcome to Chrystal and myself,” said Mrs. Spottiswoode ; “I will leave you while you read your letters together. I shall allow you a quarter of an hour, to acquaint yourself with their contents, Chrystal.”

“One hour, Pen — only one little sixty-five minutes !” cried Spottiswoode, beseechingly.

“Indeed, you shall not monopolize my guest an hour, John. Do as you please at Brierly—but I will only relinquish Chrystal a quarter of an hour from this moment.”

“Chrystal!” said Spottiswoode, as the door closed upon his sister—“Chrystal!”

Christobelle beheld her lover’s arms extended. Away with every feeling but unfeigned joy to behold him again. She flew towards him, to be clasped to his dear, warm heart! “And now,” she said, when their spirits had become somewhat tranquil, “tell me of my father, and tell me of my mother. Are they on the road?”

She listened with trembling eagerness to his reply. Spottiswoode had not seen Lady Wetheral since Christobelle quitted Fairlee. She could not be persuaded to leave her room, or resume the direction of the establishment. Sir John Wetheral suffered greatly from her determined resolution to avoid the man on whom he had bestowed his daughter; and he felt deeply, also, the privation of domestic comfort. It was that privation which kept Spottiswoode at Fairlee—he was anxious to be useful to the father who mourned her daughter’s absence, and felt alone, in his own house.

Spottiswoode knew Christobelle would wish him to stay and solace her father—and he did stay; but his thoughts were chained to Brierly, while he lingered at Lochleven. He had never trusted himself to visit places where they had

roamed together. He had not once dared to seat himself on the rocky bench, or walk the terrace by moonlight. He had sat constantly reading in the window which witnessed their first confession of attachment, and he numbered the days which lagged heavily between him and his rest. He had been three weeks absent from all he loved.

How Christobelle dwelt upon the words which fell from Spottiswoode's lips! She could not sorrow for her mother's harshness while he was near her. She only felt the calm of his presence, and the absence of every regret. But she should weep when she was alone again! She should suffer when she had time to reflect upon every thing—but not at *that* moment, for the arm of Spottiswoode encircled her, and she was too happy to reflect.

Christobelle received no letter from Lady Wetheral, but her father wrote to her of all he suffered; and he said, his happiest moments were passed in contemplating her prospects. His Chrystal was given to a man who would value the blessing conferred upon him. She would be the wife of a good man—a wife as happy as Isabel, or as Anna Maria proved to be—a wife whose hopes were anchored upon high principle

and religious feeling, and who, therefore, would not be called upon to endure the undying torments of self-reproach.

He could not allow himself to think upon Clara—but she had been removed early from her strife. What Julia's destiny would be, he could not venture to assert. She was a banished child to him. They were to begin their journey the day after Spottiswoode quitted Fairlee, but the passage would be very slowly made, as her mother could not endure travelling long—her nerves were worse than ever. Her father urged her to be at Wetheral to receive them. If her other parent would not see her, Wetheral was large enough to contain them apart, but *he* could not live without her, and she must not disappoint him of her presence. Her father concluded his epistle with a thousand parental blessings and cares for her future comforts.

Spottiswoode watched Christobelle as she read. “Is it a letter of comfort, my Chrystal?” he asked, as she finished its perusal. “Yes, I think so, by those large eyes, as Pen calls them. It *is* a letter of comfort, is it not, dearest Chrystal?”

Christobelle placed it silently into his hands, and she now watched Spottiswoode as he read. She saw the deepened red upon his cheek, as he

lingered over her father's commendation, and his eye met her own.

"Every word of it is true, Spottiswoode," she observed.

"You are a partial, dear creature, Chrystal; but I will try to deserve his opinion so kindly expressed."

Mrs. Spottiswoode entered. "Three minutes past the quarter, John, and every one is impatient to see Chrystal again. Papa says she is as beautiful as his celebrated colt, which is the height of his commendation. I am jealous, too, myself of your society. You must return with me, good people." She led them forth.

Christobelle conferred with Boscawen upon the contents of her father's letter. Since he wished her to be at Wetheral when he arrived, she thought she had better not return to Brierly. They might travel more rapidly than was anticipated. Lady Wetheral might feel more equal to the journey than she imagined, and Christobelle might be at Brierly the moment they reached Wetheral. She felt she would prefer returning to Wetheral from Lidham; and Isabel would understand the circumstances, which left her no power to act otherwise. She would return to Brierly at a future time.

“Do as you please, my dear Chrystal : I think you are right in your decision. Your trunks shall be forwarded to Wetheral, and I will see you safely there to-morrow.”

“Oh, nonsense, nonsense !” said Mrs. Spottiswoode. “Mr. Boscawen, you are an excellent guardian, but I cannot think your scheme a good one. Leave Chrystal with us : we are only three miles from Wetheral, and I will drive her over every day, to make preparations. If Sir John Wetheral should arrive unexpectedly, she will be there in twenty minutes — Chrystal shall not remain alone in that enormous place !”

Much consultation took place, and it was decided, at last, that Christobelle should accept Mrs. Spottiswoode’s invitation, and remain at Lidham : Mr. Boscawen consequently changed his own plans, and determined to return immediately to Brierly. The horses were yet at Lidham, and they should take him back to Shrewsbury.

“Now what extreme folly, my dear Mr. Boscawen ! You intended to stay here with Chrystal : why not allow us still the pleasure of your company ?” Mrs. Spottiswoode would not hear of his departure. “Charles, persuade Mr. Boscawen to remain at Lidham !”

But Mr. Boscawen was resolved to return to Isabel: "he was in attendance upon Christobelle when he left his home; and now that charge was removed, he must return to Brierly and Isabel. He should acquaint her with Christobelle's movements, and he felt obliged by their wish to detain him, but he never left Isabel unless a momentous care devolved upon him, such as watching over the personal safety of his attractive sister Bell, or a child's tooth to be extracted. He should return *now* in time for Isabel's tea."

Excellent Boscawen! How fortunate was Isabel in securing a man so devoted to her comforts, and so loth to be absent from her. Her father was indeed right when he said Boscawen's age was the only objection he could urge against him.

And Christobelle was left at Lidham with the Spottiswoodes — the Miss Wycherly of other days, when Julia was her bosom-friend, and the Charles Spottiswoode with whom she suffered so long and despairingly, till Julia's bold confession ended the painful suspense on both sides! She was also wedded in heart to the elder brother, and their renewed acquaintance sprung

at once into friendship at the very moment of its renewal.

But where was Julia, who used to gladden her friends' heart so often? Where was the confidante of Penelope Wycherly, who used to fly to Lidham, to console and assist her friend in adversity, caused by her own transgressions? Where was that sprightly, affectionate creature? Alas! she was lost to her friends, and her voice had ceased to be heard among them! More than five years had elapsed since Julia's marriage, and from that hour she had never seen Lidham, or its inmates; she had not even noticed the nuptials of its mistress. What a change must have come over Julia!

It was a day of exquisite enjoyment at Lidham. Mrs. Spottiswoode loved to look at Christobelle, for she said she was strangely like Julia, and her heart bounded towards her as to an old and dear friend. Spottiswoode was also at her side, and there were no noisy children to break the tranquillity of her enjoyment by their unwelcome mirth. How could she be otherwise than most happy? What evil could reach her, while those she loved were near, and she could listen to the voice of her beloved one? None!

Mrs. Spottiswoode engaged the following

morning to drive Christobelle to Wetheral, and the ladies agreed to remain quietly in the house with their work, till the hour arrived for their airing. It was then that Mrs. Spottiswoode opened her heart, and told Christobelle all her fears respecting Julia's happiness. She heard only reports like the rest of the world ; but they were reports which filled her with uneasiness and apprehension. She felt assured her friend had been sacrificed, and she was equally certain the Dowager-countess had been the mental vampire which clung to Julia, and destroyed her peace, by interfering with and withholding her correspondence. Sir John Wetheral had suspected as much at Bedinfield himself—she knew it was not Julia's nature to forget her friends—she would never credit the assertion, let who would insinuate it.

Reports breathed suspicion on her fame, with regard to Colonel Neville ; but she would stake her existence that, however Julia's taste must have turned disgusted from her wretched lord, she was pure as unsunned snow. Any one who dared to question her friend's purity of mind before her, would rouse the blood of all the Wycherlys in her veins. Charles did not like the subject ever brought forward in her presence,

because she felt keenly every remark which touched upon her friend's miserable fate ; but now the gentlemen were out of the way, she could unfold her fears to Christobelle.

“If ever there was a wretch in the form of mortal, Chrystal,” she continued, “it is that wicked dowager ; and we shall live to see it confined in the case of my poor Julia, the friend of my youth, whom I loved so dearly. I told Charles she was going to woe, when she was led like a lamb to the slaughter ! Oh, Julia should *not* have married Lord Ennismore, Chrystal !”

Mrs. Spottiswoode became affected as she dwelt upon the scenes of the past ; and she detailed to Christobelle many incidents which had escaped her young observation. It was delightful to Christobelle to hear her talk of Julia, and her eyes often bore testimony to the sympathy she felt in the narration of their long friendship, and the events of their earliest days. The hall-door bell pealed its sounds as they wept and talked. Mrs. Spottiswoode was surprised and annoyed ; she breathed hastily upon her hands, and applied them to her eyes.

“How very disagreeably early some people are calling ; and our eyes, Chrystal, are quite unfit to be seen ! I must draw down the blinds. I

really cannot receive any one with such a pair of eyes and such a heavy heart, comfortably."

The door was thrown open, but no name was announced. A female figure, however, appeared, and approached slowly and unsteadily towards Mrs. Spottiswoode. She spoke in tones which startled her ear and heart.

"I am come to try my friend's truth; for she told me that in evil report, or in good report, in weal or woe, *here* I should find rest!"

Mrs. Spottiswoode stood motionless.

"Julia!" she faintly uttered—"is this Julia's voice!"

"It is Julia, Penelope! I am come to seek my promised home, for elsewhere there is none!"

"Welcome, a thousand welcomes!" cried Mrs. Spottiswoode, springing towards Lady Ennismore, and clasping her to her heart with a straining pressure — "oh! welcome, whatever event may have brought my lost Julia home!"

"Home!" replied Lady Ennismore—"home! Have I been obliged to return from whence I came, to find a home!" Lady Ennismore shuddered as she spoke, and fell senseless in the still close embrace of her friend.

"Chrystal!" cried Mrs. Spottiswoode, "bolt the door: let no one enter this room!"

Miss Wetheral obeyed in silence, and she then assisted Mrs. Spottiswoode in conveying her sister to the sofa, where she remained extended till her consciousness gradually returned. Mrs. Spottiswoode trembled, but her powers of thought were clear and undisturbed. She spoke low, as Lady Ennismore lay in blessed forgetfulness of present sufferings.

“Chrystal, we will carry Julia into your room when she recovers, and here my angel friend will be tranquil. I will trust — I *know* she is blameless! but a thousand errors would not change my love, or the devotion with which I will watch over her for ever. If all the world deserted her, she would be *my* own dear friend; but for her fame’s sake, I hope — no, it is *not* so — it is *not* so!”

Christobelle gazed in astonishment at her sister’s extended form. She mechanically obeyed Mrs. Spottiswoode’s directions, but her mind was a chaos. She heard her remarks, though she did not reply to them; she could not withdraw her eyes from the object which absorbed all her wonder.

“Chrystal,” continued Mrs. Spottiswoode, as she chafed Julia’s temples with eau de Cologne, “there has been dreadful work to bring my

blessed friend to this! Her spirit has been dealt with beyond her powers of endurance, to urge this step; but I, Penelope, am with her, and she is again at Lidham. I bless the events which have brought her from banishment, and given her again to her friends!"

A slight pressure from the hand which was clasped by Mrs. Spottiswoode, attested returning animation in Lady Ennismore, and proved that she heard and understood her friends' words. Mrs. Spottiswoode proceeded with deep feeling.

"Julia, you hear me—you hear your friend declare, that she cannot mourn the cause which has given her back the companion of her early days. We were ever together, Julia, and together we enjoyed our first step upon the gay stage of our pleasures. We will also walk together through the waters of adversity, and our sorrows shall be, as our joys have been, borne in fellowship. I am Penelope Wycherly in *heart*, and you are Julia Wetheral. We will part no more, my own dear, ill-used friend!"

Lady Ennismore raised her head from its pillow with effort.

"I have been hardly dealt with, I have been cruelly treated, Penelope! I must have been

very treacherously used, since I believed in the desertion of all my friends !”

“ I see it all ; I have long seen and feared all this, Julia ! I know the snares which have been set to wreck your happiness, and throw you from your husband’s heart ! I know the influence which was feared and counteracted by that vile woman, with all the energy of vileness !”

A fit of trembling attacked Lady Ennismore, and cold perspiration bedewed her face and hands.

“ If *you* have seen it, or can understand it, Penelope,” she exclaimed, “ how must *I* have felt it !” Lady Ennismore sunk back with the effort of speaking.

“ Chrystal,” said Mrs. Spottiswoode, “ let us support Lady Ennismore to your room at once. There alone will be security and quiet. The gentlemen may be returning.”

“ What gentlemen ?” exclaimed Lady Ennismore, hastily. “ Don’t allow Neville to come near me. I will never see him again.”

“ No one is coming, my own Julia, but Charles Spottiswoode. You remember Charles Spottiswoode — your friend and mine, and now my husband ?”

“ Yes, I remember him, but I never heard of

your nuptials ; every body was so silent, every thing was kept from me !”

“ Did Colonel Neville never inform you of Shropshire events, through the medium of the papers, dearest ?”

The name of Neville pronounced by other lips produced extreme terror. Lady Ennismore started up, and seized Mrs. Spottiswoode’s hands.

“ Don’t believe a word of it, Penelope !— don’t credit that horrible assertion ! it is untrue ! As I am looking for the peace which can only reach me beyond the grave, I never lost my own respect, or forgot I was a wife !”

“ I knew it — I knew it ! — I never would believe a word of their vile reports !” exclaimed Mrs. Spottiswoode, bursting into tears : “ but oh, Julia, your words are balm to my heart !”

“ I have flown from treachery, Penelope ; and if you receive me, so will my father. Oh, my father ! — my poor father ! — you told me your heart was not in my marriage ! I heeded you not ! I clung to my mother’s prophecies that I should be great and happy !”

Lady Ennismore’s emotion became alarming ; and it was with some difficulty she was conveyed into her sister’s apartment. She leaned

upon her friend, and Christobelle assisted in supporting her trembling form. Christobelle marked her sister's emotion, and heard her deep suppressed sobs. (The last time she beheld Julia Wetheral she was led in the pomp and circumstance of bridal glory, anticipating the excellent things which wealth and station are supposed to command.) *Vide Vol. II. Page 205*

Lady Ennismore was laid upon the bed, and it was hoped repose would give comparative tranquillity, but Julia's disease was of the heart : she could not rest.

“ Penelope,” she said, as her pale cheek grew hectic in its deep glow, “ I have flown *from* Neville ! — I have not flown *with* him ! The world may say my flight was wrong, but they cannot say it was infamous ! ”

“ Heed them not who dare say so, Julia. We are together, and my love shall be your shield from the world's remarks—but it will soon distinguish your innocence—it will not lay the burthen on the innocent long. You will be justified in your action, my own dear friend ! ”

“ I hope so—I hope so ! I fled from my own heart, too, Penelope ; I might have fallen like others, but I fled from my own heart, and from persecution. Oh ! don't let any one come near

me but yourself, Penelope. That young lady is very kind. I told Neville to follow me no more. Do not persecute me, Neville—let me alone to grieve silently. I am unhappy, but I am yet a guiltless wife. I will go to Penelope.....”

Lady Ennismore’s spirit wandered : fever was upon her cheek, and she ceased to remember her own friend.

“I will go to Penelope—she always loved me, and she will save her poor friend. I wish I could get to Lidham ! A chaise, Conynham—a chaise to the lake-house ! If I could only get in—but my foot will not move. Lift me in, Conynham, if you would save me from the Countess !”

A slight shriek broke from Julia’s lips, as if in her vision she had encountered her mother-in-law. Mrs. Spottiswoode sent instantly for advice, and she summoned her husband, to consult with him upon the extraordinary arrival of Lady Ennismore. While the short interview took place in her dressing-room, Christobelle sat by the bed-side of the invalid, who had relapsed into total forgetfulness of her situation ; and she could gather from her wanderings the nature of her sufferings, and the reason of her flight from Bedinfield. It broke Christobelle’s heart, to hear her mournful voice in its ravings.

“Let me attend my lord, I beseech you. If he is ill, who dare close the doors of his apartments upon his wife? It is my duty to wait upon my lord—no, I will not be left whole hours and days with Neville. I know his kindness and his love for me. Where is my father? Will any one seek my father?—no, Neville, never—I am a wife—a guiltless wife—do not persecute me. I will go to Penelope, for she never ceased to love me—they are dead, I think—all that belong to me are dead!”

Low moanings succeeded, till again Julia burst forth in complaint, as her ideas dwelt upon the painful scenes of Bedinfield. All her anxiety manifested itself in reproaches to Colonel Neville, and in fancied inability to enter her lord’s chamber. Not one self-reproach mingled among her moving cries—all was purity of thought, as Mrs. Spottiswoode had unceasingly believed and maintained, in her remarks upon Julia’s conduct.

Charles Spottiswoode heard her complaints, as she rambled in alarm lest the Countess should intercept her flight to Penelope, and he could not endure the sound of her voice in sorrow: he quitted the dressing-room in distress almost as poignant as that which agonized the heart of his lady, who sat in silence and in tears, hoping fer-

vently that the step of the physician would soon be heard. It was vain to soothe her complaints; she did not hear the voice of consolation. She was conversing with herself upon circumstances which absorbed her attention, and her mind was evidently in the home she had quitted so eagerly. He came at last. The voice of Dr. Darwin sounded in the gallery, and there was hope and comfort in the knowledge that all would be done which science and kindness could effect. This was the second member of the Wetheral family whom he had attended under circumstances peculiarly painful.

Dr. Darwin at once discovered the secret of Lady Ennismore's state, and applied himself to give temporary tranquillity to her disordered mind. It could be, he said, but temporary rest: he could not make her forget the sorrow which raged within, or mitigate her waking grief—that must be effected by other hands—but anodynes would lull its fury, and bestow rest upon the frame. Since Lady Ennismore spoke fondly of her father and Mrs. Spottiswoode, they must be near her; and, if possible, they should be present whenever she woke from her unnatural rest. The sight of esteemed objects was grateful, and would prevent the immediate recurrence of pain-

ful thoughts. It was very fortunate Sir John Wetheral was expected shortly, and he would advise the constant attendance at present of Mrs. Spottiswoode alone.

Mrs. Spottiswoode remarked that Lady Ennismore had not recognised Christobelle during the whole scene. She thought it a remarkable instance of forgetfulness in a person so nearly connected. Dr. Darwin considered it only a proof of the depth of her suffering, which fed exclusively upon itself. Till the recognition took place, he prohibited Christobelle's return into her room, but the sooner it was named to her ladyship the better—it would rouse her attention from more afflicting thoughts.

Dr. Darwin remained at Lidham till the medicine took effect upon Julia's nerves, and she sank into sleep. Mrs. Spottiswoode and Christobelle then sat in the dressing-room, with its door half closed, and pondered over the event of the morning. It was too evident that the Dowager had thrown Colonel Neville constantly into the society of Julia, and that she had been debarred all communication with Lord Ennismore.

What could be the reason which prompted the Dowager to poison the fountain of their domes-

tic peace? It was that insatiable love of power, which thirsted for entire dominion over the imbecile mind of her son, and for which every tie, moral and religious, must be torn asunder. It was that devouring passion for domination, which swallowed up every kindly feeling, and bore down all impediments to its terrific strides. It had sacrificed the happiness of Julia, the best and gentlest of created beings—it had aimed at her reputation; and, to sever Julia's influence from her son at one fell swoop, the Countess had endeavoured to make her a prey to infamy. She had endeavoured to cause an eternal separation between two unoffending beings, that her reign at Bedinfield might be perpetual! She had succeeded only in driving Julia from her husband's house. Oh, Power! how gradually and wickedly do its votaries consume every right principle, to feed its fiercely-burning fires!

Christobelle saw Spottiswoode but once after her sister's mournful entrance into Lidham, and she was too much overpowered with regret to enjoy his society. She could not recall her thoughts from Julia, to concentrate them even upon him—but he was also in low spirits. His feeling heart sympathised in the general sorrow, and they mourned together over the fallen hopes

and the short career of Julia's brilliant prospects. Like a shooting star, she had fallen from the altitudes of a princely marriage, to the cold, dark nothingness of disappointed earthly pleasures. How Christobelle mourned over her brightly gay sister, whom she remembered so lovely and so loved! She did not remain long with Spottiswoode. She left him, to pass the evening and night in her dressing-room, to assist Mrs. Spottiswoode in her cares, and to think of Julia.

CHAPTER XXX.

Lady Ennismore's illness was long in its continuance and severe in its effects. Mrs. Spottiswoode watched over her with unceasing and affecting attention; and it was often painful to witness her agonized fears, lest her friend should sink beneath the combined attacks of mental and bodily suffering. It was sad to look upon a creature so changed as Julia, and hear her touching exclamations under the effects of almost constant delirium. It was heart-rending to hear her call upon Lady Ennismore with passionate entreaties, demanding admittance to her lord, and imploring her to save her from Neville—it was still more touching to hear her imprecate sorrow upon the head of those who could lure a desolate wife to her destruction.

The sight of Dr. Darwin terrified the invalid for many days. She addressed him as Colonel

Neville, and her wandering fancy conceived that Colonel Neville was seeking an interview. She waved him from the room with an impetuous movement, and implored him to leave an unhappy wife in peace. She said he knew she loved him—he knew she loved the friend who was kind to her when all others had deserted her, but she commanded him to fly from her!—she was the wife of Lord Ennismore, and no power on earth should induce her to listen to him. “If her father was alive to protect her,” she said, “he would shelter her from woe and treachery—but all were gone who ever loved her, and she would go to her long lost friend Penelope.”

It was evident Lady Ennismore had flown from Bedinfield to escape from her own heart, as she avowed to Mrs. Spottiswoode. It was evident, also, that the Dowager-countess had acted an unholy part by her daughter, in throwing her constantly into the society of Colonel Neville, and barring her entrance into the apartments of her sickly and weak-minded husband. Such cruelty towards an innocent and trusting creature affected the heart of Mrs. Spottiswoode almost to illness: her mind dwelt long and strongly upon the distress of heart, which must have been endured by her friend before she could

have fled from her husband's house; and Mr. Spottiswoode became alarmed lest his wife's health should fall a sacrifice to her devoted attachment to the friend of her early days.

In this time of severe trial to all parties, Sir John Spottiswoode acted with the kindest consideration; and he undertook to meet Sir John Wetheral upon his arrival, and break to him the mournful intelligence of Lady Ennismore's situation. Before his arrival, however, her ladyship had regained her consciousness of all that was passing round her, and the parched fever, which consumed her animal powers, yielded to the judicious treatment of her medical adviser. Julia again recognized her friend, and again received pleasure in feeling herself watched over and protected by those she loved. Her weakness was excessive, and her mind still dwelt upon the sorrow which oppressed her; but it was no longer accompanied by that fearful aberration of intellect, which wasted her strength, and tore the hearts of those who witnessed its effects. Mrs. Spottiswoode passed her waking hours at her friend's side, for it was a cordial to Julia's spirit to see her near, and to know Penelope was watching over her; but Christobelle was deputed

to guard her short and uneasy slumbers. It was a period of deep and trembling anxiety.

Sir John Wetheral's cares were crowding upon him. He had been destined for some years to witness the shattered nerves and depressed spirits of his lady, and he was now called upon to witness the sufferings of Julia, and to support her through the difficulties of her situation. It was a severe trial to his feelings; but he met the intelligence with fortitude. His unworldly actions caused no self-reproach, and he had never sacrificed his sense of right to the idols of a vain imagination, therefore his regrets, however bitter, were untinged by the gloomy reflection that his own hand had barbed the arrow which struck his heart.

Not so Lady Wetheral. The intelligence of Julia's flight to Lidham prostrated her to the earth, and bowed down all her hopes. She confined herself to her own room, and talked incessantly to Mrs. Bevan of the misery which overpowered her. "She had done such things for Clara and Julia!—she had formed, and prosecuted, and brought into effect, plans for their advancement, which should have raised them far above their companions; yet they were dashed to the ground, after such anxieties and fears!

The daughters whom she peculiarly considered under her own rule had proved themselves unequal to enjoy the exalted situations she had marked out for them; and Bell, a perfect child, fostered among the wild hills of Lochleven, had presumed to refuse a dukedom, in order to follow her mean affections, and content herself with a small estate in Worcestershire! What was Julia, now? A truant wife—a woman, so lost to propriety, that her future position in people's minds must be equivocal—a creature who would in future be gazed upon as a deserter from Bedinfield. Such was the fate of those who created scenes!—a world's wonder, and a thing of nought!" A period of silence would ensue, subsequent to each irritable complaint; and Lady Wetheral would sink into deep fits of despondency, followed by sudden reaction, which threatened to undermine her constitution.

When Julia became sufficiently calm to bear the sight of a third person without alarm, Christobelle was silently admitted to her presence, and was recognized immediately with a joy which gave unfeigned satisfaction to Mrs. Spottiswoode. It seemed as if Lady Ennismore's spirit was not dead to emotions which must eventually lure her thoughts from melancholy

images, and reconcile her to life. Lady Ennismore fixed her eyes upon her sister with a momentary expression of delight, which gradually changed into sadness, and the tears stole down her cheeks. She pressed her hand to her heart. “Chrystal,” she said, “when I saw you last, I was not as I am now !”

Mrs. Spottiswoode embraced her, and bade her think of happier times. Julia looked at her with eyes swimming in tears.

“Penelope, it soothes me to talk of the past, for my sorrow has been confined too painfully to my own bosom. Let me tell Chrystal how useless were the aids of grandeur and gratified ambition to give comfort to a breaking heart. It may make her less careful of the follies of worldly gifts—less ambitious than I was. Yet, I loved him ; I loved Ennismore, once ; but what heart will love through coldness—through indifference, and separation ? Who can love, when kindly affections are thrown aside, or made the sport of unfeeling ridicule ? Chrystal, marry not, unless you are sure you are valued—unless you love a man for the goodness of his nature, and not for his earthly possessions.”

Christobelle bent forward, and pressed her

lips upon Julia's hand, as it lay upon her own. She could not speak.

“ If they tell you, Chrystal, that life has no blessings beyond high station and the luxuries of wealth, look at me, and believe them not. It is false to say so. My father told me it was false, and I did not heed him. I smiled at his anxiety, and thought him prejudiced. Where is my father?—Where is my dear father? Is he alive, Penelope? Oh, do not say that good father is gone, who mourned so, after my hapless choice was made—who looked so calm and so sad at Bedinfield !”

Christobelle assured her every member of the family still lived, and then she repeated to her the message which her father had charged her to deliver when Julia's returning reason could bear its import. It was a message of kindness: they were words of indulgent goodness, for none other ever passed *his* lips. “ Tell my poor Julia,” he said, “ that her father's eyes long to behold her, and his arms are open to embrace her, when she can bear the meeting. There is a home at Wetheral, to shelter her; and his fond affections are anxious to make her forget she ever left its protection.” Julia wept abundantly.

“ Yes, we resist advice, and defy the truths

which tell us how weak and insufficient we are to reason upon things which concern our peace hereafter. I believed my mother-in-law was all truth—all sincerity. I felt for Lord Ennismore's ailments. I did not know how deeply those ailments affect the temper and weaken the mind. I was ambitious—I was resolved to soar : and see, Chrystal, how I have fallen ! Thank Heaven, I am guiltless !—thank Heaven, I can return to my father's house, untainted by crime ! I shall never more be happy, but I can demand respect, and bow submissively to a just punishment for my sordid views. I fancied I could command all, as the wife of Ennismore ! but I came to Penelope's house—a poor, solitary, wretched wife—a fugitive from Bedinfield—flying, above all, from myself. Oh, my friend, my dear Penelope, save me from myself !”

“ Fear not,” replied Mrs. Spottiswoode, kneeling by her bed-side, and clasping Julia's hands in her own, “ fear not, my companion and friend ! I will be with you, and my counsel and affection shall support you. Think no more of the past, but hope every thing from the future : forget all that has occurred, and look around you, upon the friends of your youth, all prepared to welcome and cherish you, dearest Julia.”

“ I wish I *could* forget—I wish I could struggle, and burst the bonds which destroy my tranquillity, Penelope! I wish I could wipe away remembrances which will embitter my existence, and which have shortened the days of my youth, and multiplied my sorrows—how I wish I *could* forget !”

Mrs. Spottiswoode signed to Christobelle to withdraw, and she retired into the dressing-room. Penelope continued kneeling, and embracing the hands of her complaining friend.

“ Julia, open your heart to your old favourite, and remember there was a time when we never concealed a thought from each other’s knowledge.”

Julia gasped and trembled.

“ Julia, your friend has guessed the struggles you have endured, and your flight has increased her love and high respect, if it could allow an increase. It is not every ill-used wife—it is not every desolate heart—that could have flown from Neville.” Julia’s hands became cold as marble in Mrs. Spottiswoode’s grasp, and she turned her face from her friend’s gaze in terror.

“ Julia,” continued Mrs. Spottiswoode, “ by every recollection of our childhood passed together — by the tenderness which ever existed

between us, and by our attachment, which has survived absence and silence, open your heart to your poor Penelope ! It is only known to Chrystal and myself, that your temptations have been severe, and your virtue severer still. It is to our bosoms alone that your confessions have been made, Julia ; and we love, with a deeper feeling of esteem, the virtues we could not emulate under the same trial. Do not speak in humility to *us* — do not fear to boast of the victory over your own heart !”

“ Have I then been delirious, Penelope ? Have I spoken of him in bitterness ? Have I said any thing of Ennismore in anger ? I have no anger towards him. He was but weak and devoted to his mother. My father cautioned me ! I have no excuse, Penelope. How anxiously my father cautioned me, and how stupidly I rejected the caution !”

“ You were young, Julia ; you could not suspect an artful and cold-hearted woman !”

“ So we say, when a parent’s anxiety has been scoffed at, and we are crushed by a dreadful experience. I knew my father’s indulgence — I knew his fears for my happiness — yet I turned to listen to the dictates of a wretched ambition. Oh, my mother, my mother, *you* sacrificed me !”

Julia sank upon the pillow from which she had risen with a strong effort, and continued, in faltering accents—"Penelope, did I mention another name? If I did, have mercy on me, and forbear to judge your friend! You do not know how I have striven to do right!"

"I do know it, my beloved, I do know it—" exclaimed Mrs. Spottiswoode, "and I guessed it, before your overcharged heart declared it in delirium. I, your friend, know it; and may those who have shadowed your days with evil, drink deep of the cup they prepared for you, Julia!"

"Oh, my mother, my mother!" cried Julia, "how could you guide me into misery! How could I think you were preparing sorrow for the child who loved and believed in your words!"

Mrs. Spottiswoode wept over the friend who lay prostrate, in body and mind, before her. Julia essayed to rise, but her exhaustion was too great; she could only press the hand of her faithful friend.

"Penelope, as you love me, never name even to myself the horrible secret of my soul. Let it be for ever forgotten between us, and strengthen me by your wise counsel and friendship, my own blessed companion of once happy days!"

"Rest, rest, Julia," said Mrs. Spottiswoode,

“and do not exert your failing strength. I understand you. We will in future only speak of calm days, and look forward to the sober pleasures of friendship. Among your friends, the friends of your youth, Julia, there will be peace.”

Lady Ennismore shook her head, and the tears which trickled through her closed eyelids evinced her hopelessness of future tranquillity, but she remained silent. Mrs. Spottiswoode kissed her pale cheek.

“Exert yourself no more, dearest Julia. I know all that is passing in your heart, and its struggles for oblivion upon the past. Weep not, my ill-used friend—my heart shall comfort you, and my love shall heal the wounds of betrayed affection. You do not know the hearts which are rallying round you, and are only waiting your convalescence to declare themselves your sympathising and devoted friends. Be at rest, my dearest Julia—I fear for the consequences of this weakening conversation. Try to be composed and sleep, to quiet your poor friend’s alarms.”

But the conversation had not weakened Lady Ennismore. Her spirit was lightened by the knowledge that her secret was discovered, and that her friend still loved and honoured her with

unabated affection. It was a relief to her heart, to feel assured that her friend did not judge her severely ; but that, with true friendship, she had poured balm upon her broken hopes, and sympathised in her sufferings. The load of care which pressed upon her mind and strength was cast upon the confiding friend of her youth, whose consolations soothed and tranquillized the sorrow which had consumed her. The husband, for whom she had quitted her home and friends, had caused many miseries ; but the hand of friendship had supported her. What woe is not assuaged by that gentle and cheering consolation ! — that gift accorded by Providence to soften the ills of a patient and submissive spirit !

Lady Ennismore wept silently for some time, but she did not weep with the bitterness which destroys rest. Doubtless, her tears fell with mingled feelings of joy and grief ; doubtless, her heart was filled with grateful thanks, that her destiny was yet cheered by the consolations of tender and affectionate friends ; doubtless, she wept to feel the tears of Penelope upon her cheek ; that Penelope Wycherly, whom *she* had befriended in her hour of affliction, and who had shared with her the joys and fears of childhood. No wonder Lady Ennismore wept ! though her

emotion ceased to be of that distressing nature which gave her friends so much pain to witness. It was weeping which relieved her heart, and produced favourable results; for she became gradually more tranquil, and her pale thin hand relaxing in its grasp, gave happy assurance to Mrs. Spottiswoode that her unhappy friend slumbered.

When Dr. Darwin called again at Lidham, Lady Ennismore still slept and lay composed. From that moment Julia's most distressing symptoms disappeared, but she suffered from a languor which was oppressive; a languor which pervaded mind and body to such a powerful degree, that she scarcely seemed to exist. It had one excellent result. Lady Ennismore ceased to suffer pain: it was a state apparently of perfect torpor, caused by intense distress, and its tranquillity must be to her enjoyment. She ceased to feel the extent of her misery.

Sir John Wetheral's visits to Lidham were of daily occurrence; he longed to clasp his poor fugitive to his heart; but Lady Ennismore's present situation required care, and all agitating interviews were prohibited. It was only when the torpor which had seized upon her became alarming by its continuance, that her father's

presence was advised, to try its effect upon her mind. If that interview did not awaken her powers, it was feared that nothing henceforth would rouse her from the stillness of death, till she forgot for ever the cares which had disturbed her short pilgrimage. Mrs. Spottiswoode urged the interview with anxious hope: she knew Julia's strong affections, and she felt firmly convinced that if any earthly object *could* rouse her, it would be the sight of her indulgent parent. Sir John Wetheral was accordingly summoned to appear unexpectedly before Lady Ennismore.

Julia was seated in her arm-chair, with her eyes fixed on the ground, when Christobelle entered her chamber in the evening; but, as usual, no sign of recognition took place. Miss Wetheral advanced towards her sister, and offered her arm. "Julia, let us take one turn round the room."

Lady Ennismore rose without speaking, and mechanically took the arm of Christobelle, but she did not raise her eyes. Miss Wetheral spoke again.

"Julia, look there!"

Lady Ennismore's eye slowly followed the direction of her sister's hand, which pointed towards the door. A scream burst from her lips,

as she beheld her father standing before her, and she flew into his arms. The sight of her father *did* rouse every recollection !

It is needless to dwell upon a scene so fraught with distress, or to describe the affecting interview. It would be painful to repeat Lady Ennismore's self-upbraidings, or to recount her father's soothing, and most parental words of comfort. He welcomed his Julia to his heart and home, with endearments which went deep into her grateful heart, and spoke peace to her broken spirit. It was a scene which Mrs. Spottiswoode and Christobelle never forgot. The tears they shed that evening bore testimony to their deep emotion.

When Sir John Wetheral and his daughter became more tranquil, Mrs. Spottiswoode would have terminated the interview, but Julia clung to her father's arm, and would not be separated from him. She would now, she said, open her heart to those so dear to her, that the work of a long absence might be confided to her parent's breast, and he should judge if her flight was rashly done. Mrs. Spottiswoode feared a relapse ; but Julia would not hear of rest. " Let me speak now, Penelope, while my spirit is equal to the task. I may be ill, but my story

must be told ; my father must be told ; it will be a relief to know I need recur to the past no more. Let me speak *now*, Penelope.”

Lady Ennismore recapitulated the events which had taken place since her father’s visit to Bedinfield, and described her distress at finding he had departed without bidding her farewell. “Her mother-in-law had assured her so calmly that they *would* depart, and declined remaining another day to ascertain my lord’s sudden attack, that she could not disbelieve the assertion, and the thought had given her severe pain. Profound silence, too, rested upon the transactions at Wetheral ; not once had she received a letter from the home which professed to love her so tenderly. Not once did they acknowledge the numberless letters she had written, to entreat their consideration, and to implore them to answer her anxieties.

“ After her father’s departure from Bedinfield, as she thought, so coldly, so unkindly ! her heart sank, and she became gloomy. Her lord received her as a stranger into his apartments during an illness of long continuance, while the Dowager remained stationed by his side, and her spirits could not endure the insulting banishment. She prayed to visit her home, to see

again her friend Miss Wycherly, to ask the reason of their silence, and demand their withdrawn affection. Her request was refused; but it was done so gently, so persuasively by her mother-in-law, that she could only weep while she acquiesced in their wishes to remain at Bedinfield.

“She began to fear Lord Ennismore did not love her; she began to suspect the politeness of his mother, whose manners had so long blinded her reason by their soft fascinations, but who had never, in a single instance, yielded to her wishes, or considered her rights as the real mistress of Bedinfield. That unchangingly-polite and flattering suavity had proved the firmest bar to her happiness; for it had left her without the power of complaint, while her heart was wrung with disappointed feelings. They had carried her almost broken-hearted to Florence.”

Julia stopped; deep sighs burst from her bosom, and her head fell upon the shoulder of Mrs. Spottiswoode: her father became powerfully agitated; and Christobelle wept, without the power of controlling her tears. Lady Ennismore proceeded:—

“At Florence, a complete separation was si-

lently effected between Lord Ennismore and herself. His lordship confined himself entirely to his suite of apartments, and months often elapsed without an interview. Sometimes he accompanied them into public, but he would retire complaining from the exertion; and, though her own spirits demanded retirement, and even solitude, his lordship's commands were imperative upon her to appear with his mother at all the diversions where English families attended.

“She became at length a mere machine in the hands of the Dowager Countess. Without one friend to consult—absent from her nearest relations—unable to speak the language of the country—melancholy and careless of existence, she followed her mother-in-law into society without enjoyment, and retired from it without satisfaction. Her days became a blank, and she passed hours in silent weeping. At length an Englishman was introduced to her by the Dowager, who pitied her situation, and sought to amuse her heavy hours with news of her native land. He told her he had seen her sister Clara's marriage with Sir Foster Kerrison in the papers, and he had also seen the mention of her death. By this statement alone she knew that Clara was

no more. No letter from England announced it, no intimation from her family informed her of a sister's loss. She stood alone in the midst of her greatness. There were none to do her a kindness, or to offer her the consolation which was tendered to the humblest individual; none save that Englishman spoke to her of home; none save him came forth from the crowd, to speak of her country and her friends."

Julia's emotion increased, and she was nearly fainting, but she waved away all assistance. "Let me say what I have to communicate, my dear friends, and then I will be silent for ever on all that is past. Ah! my dear papa, you told me I was signing your misery, when I would not listen to your words. You told me you would rather follow my silent remains to the grave than see me the wife of Ennismore. Would to Heaven I *had* died! I should now be at rest."

Sir John Wetheral pressed his unhappy daughter to his bosom, and promised her rest under his own protection, and in the society of her friends. He wished her to defer her hapless story till time had somewhat recruited her strength; she was too weak to proceed in detailing miseries which must distress and exhaust

her powers. He entreated her, for his sake and her own, to recur no more to the past.

“Let me proceed,” cried Lady Ennismore, “and judge me not hardly ; judge me as Penelope judged me, kindly and graciously. I saw little of my husband — never, in private. Lady Ennismore could have effected any thing with her son, but she smiled at my repinings, and did not comfort me. She urged me to be gay, to shake off gloomy thoughts in wild amusement, and smile as others smiled. She sought Colonel Neville’s society, and domesticated him in our palace. Wherever we went, he went also ; and our home was the home of Neville.”

Lady Ennismore sunk upon her knees before her father, and clasped his hands.

“As I live to breathe again my native air, and see the forms I love, I do believe she wished me to become the prey of evil passions, and fall a victim to her arts ! I do believe she trusted I might be thrust for ever from her sight, and become the vile thing which would banish me eternally from a husband’s presence. But I was enabled to withstand temptation. I prayed for strength to endure my destiny : and, when I dared not confide in my own efforts—when my heart was distracted, and my principles tottered,

then I knew I should find help at Lidham ; for Penelope told me, in sickness or in sorrow, her home should be my home ; and I have flown to her for safety.”

Poor suffering Julia ! How she trembled as her father raised her from her suppliant attitude, and called her his long-suffering, virtuous child ! How gratefully she raised her eyes in silent prayer, when her father gloried in her principles, and said he loved her with a parent’s deepest affection and pride, for the danger she had so religiously withstood. Yes, he blessed her for the firmness she had evinced, for the virtuous conduct which had not deserted her, and for the prayerful spirit which had led her to seek refuge in her God, instead of throwing herself into the arms of man. How did a father’s blessing soothe the lacerated heart of the ill-used Julia !

From the hour of her confession, Lady Ennismore became more tranquil ; and, though her constitution had received a powerful shock, it was hoped that time would bring back some portion of her once excellent health. Sir John Wetheral resolved to escort his daughters to their home as soon as Lady Ennismore could endure a removal ; and, under the shelter of the parental roof, Julia would feel protected from the sorrows which had

darkened her married life. There she would be surrounded by her friends, and in its sanctuary she would feel no more the slights and insults which had pressed so heavily upon her affectionate heart. Mrs. Spottiswoode's near neighbourhood, and the friendship which had formed so conspicuous a part of her character, would throw a halo of consolation round the futurity of Julia ; and when her father and her friends congregated round her, the breath of public opinion dared not whisper a thought injurious to her honour.

As Lady Ennismore slowly recovered the tone of her mind, her anxiety to hear of her family increased, and she was gradually informed of the changes which had taken place. Her ladyship had greatly wondered at Lady Wetheral's absence from her room, and she mourned sincerely to hear her mother's shattered health kept her closely confined at the castle. Clara's death was also detailed to her, and Lady Ennismore wept to hear that her sister had striven with evil days. She dwelt with constant and painful interest upon her short career.

It seemed that Clara and herself had been doomed to woe ; and, though she smiled to think of Isabel's happiness, and loved to hear

of the contentment of Hatton, her ladyship's thoughts flew back to the direful scenes at Ripley, and sorrowed for the early death of Lady Kerrison. The remembrance of Clara drew Julia's contemplations from her own exclusive situation ; and her tears would flow, to think of the sister whose temper could not brook the calls upon its patience. How different had been their fate, yet how alike in misery ! She herself had borne daily and hourly provocations with unfailing submission, while Clara had spurned to tax her patience under trials, and died beneath her roused disgusts. Both had suffered — both had fallen ; but Clara had burst the bonds which fettered her happiness, and she was resting in her early grave ; while *she* was doomed to exist a widowed wife, and struggle under contumely !

When Lady Ennismore heard of Christobelle's engagement, she threw her arms around her youthful sister, and pressed her to her bosom, but she could not wish her joy.

“Chrystal,” she said, with a look of sadness, “I can wish no one joy when they quit their home, for I was congratulated by all my friends, yet my portion was the cup of bitterness ! I know Sir John Spottiswoode is worthy — at

least, it is reported so—but it is all uncertainty. When we quit our father's house, we know not what we do !”

“ But I am not marrying for wealth or title, Julia ; I am engaged to a man whose claims to my affection is his worth and excellence !”

Christobelle stood in distress at her inadvertent speech ; for worlds she would not have bruised a broken reed ; for worlds she would not wound the heart of her suffering sister. But Lady Ennismore was too high-minded to believe a blow was aimed at her own conduct.

“ It is true, Chrystal, you say it truly. You *have* chosen a good and kind-hearted man, and your fate will not be like mine. I *can*, therefore, wish you joy. May you know only indulgence, and be as Isabel and Anna Maria are ! I can wish you no higher felicity. But I have caused much trouble, for you have devoted your time to a poor creature who feels deeply the kindness of her friends, and who grieves to separate the happy. Where is Sir John Spottiswoode ?”

Sir John Spottiswoode was at Alverton. He devoted the period of Christobelle's constant attendance upon Lady Ennismore, to the arrangement of his affairs in Worcestershire ; and

when Julia's health released her sister from the cares of a sick room, Christobelle was to recal him. Miss Wetheral was easier also when she knew her lover was not near her. She could give undivided attention to her poor Julia, when she did not hear his step lingering in the gallery, or distinguish his voice under the windows, in conversation with his brother. On both sides it was a relief to part at once, till they could meet in peace. Their mutual comfort was destroyed by the knowledge that, though under the same roof, they could only meet in short and hurried interviews; and Christobelle rejoiced when her friend summoned resolution to visit Alverton.

Charles Spottiswoode also departed with his brother for a short season, and Lidham was the scene of perfect tranquillity during the distressing illness of Lady Ennismore. For the sake of Mr. Spottiswoode, who so generously relinquished his lady's society to her unfortunate friend, Sir John Wetheral hastened to withdraw with his daughters from Lidham, and Lady Ennismore sighed to see again the home of her early happiness, and to find repose in the once gay halls of Wetheral. Christobelle was, therefore, deputed to recal Sir John Spottiswoode,

and she was charged also to summon him to Wetheral Castle. Ere he could arrive, Julia would be re-established in her father's house, and the painful events which had taken place would, it was hoped, become softened by time, and the society of her early friends.

Lady Ennismore could not be expected to forget that "such things were;" but there was blessedness in feeling that her youthful error had not been accompanied by guilt, and that her sorrows could not be past hope, since she was free from self-reproach. She had endeavoured to perform the duties of a wife—she had keenly felt the influence which separated her from her husband's love—and every art had failed to render her faithless to her vows. In all these reflections there was consolation, and Julia's reward was in the love and esteem of her numerous and attached friends.

Sir John Wetheral wrote a calm and powerful appeal to the heart of the feeble-minded Lord Ennismore. He spoke of "his daughter's sufferings—her forbearance—and her return to the protection denied by her husband. He informed him of his resolution to protect that daughter whose fame must suffer by his barbarous treatment; and never more would he allow her to

return to the man who had so deeply injured her feelings, and her spotless reputation. He begged to say all future intercourse must end for ever between the families of Ennismore and Wetheral."

In due time a note was received, in the handwriting of the Dowager-countess, bearing these concise sentences :—

"The Dowager-countess of Ennismore regrets that the increased disorder of her son, Lord Ennismore, must compel her to become his amanuensis. The flight of Lady Ennismore is best known to herself; and the flight of Colonel Neville, at the same period, is also best understood by her ladyship. Lord Ennismore is content to remain deserted by his lady, and his mother will endeavour to supply her place by devoted attention to his offended and outraged feelings. Lady Ennismore is happy, if not respectable, in being upheld by her friends. The families of Bedinfield and Wetheral will meet no more."

This note was dated from Florence, and its contents were withheld from Julia. It would have caused the wounds of her heart to bleed afresh. It was better for her peace of mind, to remain in ignorance of Neville's flight, and to

be unconscious of the remark which pointed at her fame.

Julia declined seeing even Mrs. Pynsent, till her nerves had recovered their tone by long quiet, and till she had seen her mother. It would be a painful meeting with Anna Maria, because their last interview was at the altar, and that event had sealed their lives to prospects strangely opposed to each other. Anna Maria had given her vows to the man whom Julia rejected, and her lot was cast in a goodly heritage. She was a happy wife — a happy mother — and her children were growing up round her, under happy auspices : but Julia had returned home, to be protected from those who had vowed to love and honour her. It would be a very overpowering and painful meeting ; it would force recollections upon her mind, fatal to her tranquillity ; and the first sight of Anna Maria's happy face would, for some time, overthrow the placidity which she had acquired under the gentle soothings and support of Mrs. Spottiswoode. Julia contemplated the meeting with alarm, and in tears.

Mrs. Spottiswoode accompanied Sir John Wetheral and Christobelle, as they escorted Lady Ennismore to the home of her single-

hood. Julia did not speak during the little journey ; but her eyes filled with tears, as they rested on each well-known object in her route. Her emotion was excessive as the carriage entered the Lodges of Wetheral, and the avenue produced a thousand reminiscences of the past, which occasioned a strong hysteric. But there were those near her who tempered the blow to the sufferer, and softened her regrets by kind commiseration. Her father's voice alone appeared to fail in bringing calm to her heart.

“Let me not hear that voice !” she exclaimed, “for it brings to my mind how mournfully it implored me to avoid repentance ! Every thing I see remains unchanged ; it is only Clara and myself who were doomed to sink into death and wretchedness ! My mother — cruel mother ! — it is all my mother !” Oppressed with grief, Julia sank into silence, and she suffered herself to be carried into the rooms which once constituted the sleeping apartments and dressing-room of herself and Anna Maria. Julia placed her hand upon her heart, but she did not give utterance to her thoughts, as she glanced round upon well-remembered furniture, and fixed her eyes upon the large mirror which

had reflected her gay appearance upon her bridal-morn. Mrs. Spottiswoode, her bridesmaid, stood by her; and her father held her hand, as he had affectionately held it when she kneeled to receive his blessing as Julia Ennismore.

This powerful picture of the past affected her heart. She threw herself at her father's feet.

“Forgive me!—forgive my obstinate presumption, papa! I feel how truly you spoke! how blindly I followed my own judgment! This is a bitter stroke to me! All are here who did not advocate my ambitious choice!—but where are they who told me I should be greatly envied? Where is my mother, who prophesied worldly happiness, and told me I was right to persevere? Who assured me of bright realities, and years of happy freedom?”

Julia rose from her kneeling attitude, and the expression of her eyes was fearfully wild, as she held out her hands to her father.

“Why did she tell me my father loved lowly things, and could not comprehend a woman's heart? Why did she tell me Ennismore was easily influenced, and that a wife's word would supersede a mother's management? Has it been so? Have I not suffered scorn, and ridicule,

and banishment, in silence? Have I not endured a thousand regrets—a thousand struggles—a thousand insults?”

Julia paused as her eye again wandered over the mirror, and she saw the reflection of her own wasted figure and pale countenance. For one moment her whole attention was engrossed by the change which had taken place in her person. She gazed at her thin form, and raised her hands to examine the wasted fingers which had lost their once plump roundness and extreme beauty. She then fled from the apartment.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Sorrows, renewed by the associations which pressed upon her mind, impelled Lady Ennismore to seek her mother's apartments. Mrs. Bevan was attending her mistress, and Julia's noiseless step glided across the carpeted floor of the dressing-room, where Lady Wetheral lay extended on the sofa, complaining to her attendant of her own wretched feelings.

"Bevan, I am very ill to-day: I cannot see Mrs. Tom Pynsent, or admit any one. My nerves become worse and worse, and I am in a dreadful state of tremour at this moment. I cannot hold my salts bottle, it falls out of my poor nervous fingers—I am very ill to-day."

Mrs. Bevan spoke pleasing words of comfort, but her ladyship rejected them.

"Don't talk nonsense, Bevan. I hate to hear people say things which are not likely to occur.

How can I expect to be well, when Miss Wetheral obstinately defies my wishes, and all my children are determined to fly in my face? I had a dream, too, last night, which increases my disorder; I dreamt I saw Lady Ennismore brilliantly dressed, walking in a procession; and she walked so stately in jewels, and her rank placed her so high among the great ones, that I was proud of my daughter, and I smiled to see her in grandeur. Poor Julia, where is she *now!*”

“She is here,” exclaimed Lady Ennismore, standing before her mother, with her thin hands crossed upon her bosom; “here is the envied Countess of Ennismore!”

Lady Wetheral gazed upon the vision in dumb amazement.

“Look at me,” continued Julia, “look at my figure, and tell me if you believed all this would come to pass? When you assured me that wealth and rank was happiness and virtue, did you think I should return a fugitive, to seek shelter at your hands?”

“Julia!” gasped Lady Wetheral, “Julia! go! who are *you?*”

“Go?” exclaimed Lady Ennismore, “where shall I go? To Clara? Shall I rest with poor

Clara? Must I be laid by poor Clara, to find peace after my sacrifice, my absence, and my griefs?"

The tremour which attacked Lady Wetheral's frame was alarming. It precluded speech: she hid her face with her hands, as Lady Ennismore proceeded.

"For quitting a husband's home, I may be censured and avoided by the world, for it may never know my provocations and my struggles, but I should not be turned from my mother's presence! I should not be banished by the author of all my misery, as if she had no part in the misery which I endure!"

"Do not say so—oh, do not say so! Do not blame me, as Clara did!" Lady Wetheral sobbed aloud.

"I reproach no one," answered Lady Ennismore, mournfully. "I reproach no one, though I was promised happiness as the wife of Ennismore. Where is that happiness? You foretold it, mother. You said I should for ever enjoy wealth and station, and become the envied gaze of thousands! Where is it all?"

"Cease, cease!" cried Lady Wetheral, wrung by feelings of alarm and self-reproach. "I wished you to marry Pynsent, Julia!"

“Cruel mother,” exclaimed Lady Ennismore, as she caught her hand, and looked earnestly in her face, “do not say so, to drive me wilder than my poor brain feels now! Did you not hold up Ennismore to my view, as a creature to worship? Did you not tell me his coronet was worth a daring grasp, if I could gain the courtly bauble? Oh, you bid me secure the lofty establishment, and I did so, and have suffered! I wish I was with poor dead Clara! We both turned from our father, and would not heed his mild precepts. We listened to projects which suited our ambitious nature, though he deprecated the unholy passion. Oh, mother, you fostered the wild and dangerous feeling! I wish I was laid by the side of Clara! I wish I was at rest, like her!”

“Bevan, Bevan,” ejaculated Lady Wetheral, “where are you?”

Mrs. Bevan curtseyed as she stood in mute astonishment behind her lady’s sofa. She was unable to speak: her eyes were riveted upon Lady Ennismore, who still grasped her mother’s hand, and still continued her wild address.

“This has been a fearful affair! Two of us have fallen—one into the grave, and one into

living sorrow — self-banished from a heartless home. Is it not a fearful thing?"

"Do not blame me, as Clara did — do not blame me for your flight, Julia," said Lady Wetheral, endeavouring to withdraw her hand, but Lady Ennismore clasped it more closely.

"I blame no one — but two of us are lost for ever. I blame no one!"

"I detested scenes — I ever detested scenes, Julia!" Lady Wetheral rose into a sitting posture as she spoke. "I warned you from the beginning, all of you, never to offend me by violent measures, which draw down ridicule and disgust. Clara and yourself were married greatly, Julia!"

"Where has been our greatness?" said Lady Ennismore, despondingly.

"You were both placed in affluence," retorted her mother, with nervous trepidation, "and your high positions were exalted above your companions. You were greatly married — that was *my* doing: but you have thrown yourselves from the pinnacle of earthly honours—and that was *your* doing!"

"Mother, I have been betrayed, banished from my husband's presence—unhappy, and un-

cared for," said Lady Ennismore, releasing her hand, and sinking upon the floor in despair.

"I told you," continued Lady Wetheral, becoming almost vehement in her manner, "I told you many things might occur to distress your heart, but nothing could arise to make you an object of ridicule to the world, except your own folly. You have flown from Lord Ennismore's house — who will receive you? who receives a truant wife?"

"I was miserable," said the prostrate Julia.

"How few are otherwise," returned her mother, "if all secrets were disclosed? Happiness is a nonsensical word — a rock to shipwreck romantic hopes. We may not command happiness, but we *can* command external blessings. With every luxury that reflected honour upon human beings, what right had you and Clara to be otherwise than content?"

"How cold—how cruel to speak so harshly!" ejaculated Lady Ennismore.

"Had you not rank?" continued Lady Wetheral — "had you not a princely home — an earl's coronet? Had you not all the world can bestow, when you fled from your husband's protection?"

"I fled from treachery and from infamy!"

“Infamy ! Who dares report of infamy ?” Lady Wetheral started to her feet, and supported herself by grasping the back of a chair. “Has my daughter, Lady Ennismore, allowed herself to become—? has the breath of suspicion breathed upon a Wetheral !—has *one* suspicion glanced upon you, Julia ?”

“I have flown to my father, to avoid my own reproach,” cried Julia ; “I care not for the world—I have flown to escape the reproaches of my own heart.”

“Folly — madness !” observed her mother—“flown from your heart ! What heart had you which was not wedded to your station—to the eminence in life upon which you were called to stand above your companions ? Are you not wedded to the title of Ennismore ? Are you not the proud wife of a British peer ?—an earl’s wife ? Is not your heart hid behind the folds of your ermine, and buried in the magnificence of your lot ?”

“No, no—it is not there !” cried Julia, clasping her hands—“it is not there ! My heart was given to kindness. I would have loved him faithfully, but I was banished from his presence—second to his artful mother in his thoughts—betrayed by the person I most trusted—proscribed

as the mistress of his house. Many women would have resented the indignities I have borne—but I have flown from the temptations which surrounded me, and my father has given me shelter. Oh! you have sacrificed me, but do not upbraid me—I have done no wrong to any one. Why should *you* look hardly upon me, who promised me happiness, and have broken its fulfilment? Poor Clara! how we have suffered for our fault. My father warned me of my wickedness!”

“Did *I* not warn you, Lady Ennismore?” asked Lady Wetheral, with a raised complexion, as she beheld, unmoved, poor Julia’s suppliant attitude. “Did *I* not say, I scorned a woman who was mean enough to seek the world’s upbraiding by her conduct? You were the Countess of Ennismore—your flight has brought down obloquy upon the name. Who will believe the statement of a runaway? Who will believe the fugitive Lady Ennismore has been unaccompanied in her flight? The voice of the world will be loud in censure upon the step you have taken.”

“Oh, my father, my father! save me from the world—save me from reproaches like these!” exclaimed Julia, rising from her prostrate attitude, and endeavouring to quit the room; but

her mother caught her dress, and detained her. There was something awful in the expression of her countenance, as she addressed Lady Ennismore.

“If a mother sacrifices her time and endeavours to form a child’s happiness, has she not a right to expect its completion? Did I not act for you—think for you—and labour for you? Did I not place you in affluence and grandeur? Are you not the Countess of Ennismore? Tell me, are you not Countess of Ennismore, the mistress of princely Bedinfield?”

“I am the unfortunate and unhappy wife of Lord Ennismore,” answered Julia, “the nominal mistress of Bedinfield, but the real proprietor of only sorrow and degradation.”

“Away with such folly!” cried Lady Wetheral, with vehemence; “let me not hear such mad complaints, such horrible madness! Have you not all that is coveted by human beings?—state, high rank, wealth, and influence? What does your arrogant heart covet *now*? What do you presume to wish, beyond the splendid lot you have obtained?”

“Happiness—I ask for happiness! I ask for my husband’s heart—I ask for domestic peace,” replied Julia, pressing her forehead with her

trembling hands. "I ask for the simple pleasures of domestic peace. I will not accept grandeur without them!"

"You have brought public remark upon the name of Wetheral," resumed her mother, her eyes darting fire. "You have betrayed the confidence of your mother, who hoped to see her daughter an envied creature! You have thrown away the jewels of life, to grasp at shadows. Happiness!—*who* is happy?—not those who are born to stand apart in grandeur—not those upon whom the eyes of the multitude gaze in admiration. It may be a word bandied by the humble, to balance the evils of poverty, and give a zest to lowly destinies—but the great ones heed it not. *They* live in a sphere set apart from grovelling notions—they spurn the folly of romantic, sickly fancy, to hold on their course like meteors! I am a parent most miserable. I am deprived of all I laboured to advance. My heart was anchored upon the glorious destiny of three children, who have betrayed their high calling—but Bell has done the worst. A dukedom was offered her!—a dukedom was tendered to her, I say! and the puny coward struck it from her!—oh, that hour to a mother's heart! . . . "

Lady Wetheral's vehemence overpowered her

strength. The sudden and unaccountable appearance of her daughter, without any previous warning, almost led her to suppose a spirit from the dead had risen to taunt her with her deep disappointments. It seemed as if a spirit from another world had sought her, to jeer and mock at her misery as a defeated mother, and that form assumed the likeness of her banished Julia. What! had she heard the word “infamy” spoken?—did she hear that Lady Ennismore had flown from her husband? Was this to be added to Clara’s death, and Christobelle’s ingratitude? Was she indeed to endure this accumulated burthen of crushed hopes?—to see *all* her long years of anxious efforts destroyed, and behold the very beings she had raised so high, turn to rend her? What spirit could bend under such fearful ingratitude, that possessed one spark of *her* indomitable determinations?

A deep pause succeeded. Julia still listened, with her face buried in her hands, and her dress was yet in the grasp of her mother’s hand, when a cry from Mrs. Bevan startled her. Lady Ennismore looked up in terror. She beheld her incensed parent standing before her, in the attitude of reproach, but her eyes were dull, and her

form had become rigid : contending passions were warring with terrible violence in her heart.

It was a fearful and affecting scene to witness, but it could not long last. Lady Ennismore's terror at her unfortunate mother's state obliterated for the moment her own sorrows, and she flew to assist Mrs. Bevan in her cares. Sir John Wetheral and Christobelle were instantly summoned, and the Castle became a scene of alarm and confusion. Mrs. Spottiswoode was again a true-hearted and valuable friend in their affliction.

Lady Wetheral sunk into a long illness. Her strife of heart—the strife of a high and determined spirit contending with bitter mortifications in all those things which she had so fondly cherished—had nearly proved fatal to her frame, and she was long vibrating between life and death. But her naturally good constitution, and the unremitting attentions of her daughters, overcame the attacks of a dangerous malady, and gradually Lady Wetheral became again convalescent. The body slowly acquired some portion of renewed health, but the mind was fixed in gloomy irritability. Nothing could exceed her ladyship's unbearable tyranny to those gentle beings who strove to soothe her long confinement. The victims of her ambitious projects

were now the objects of constant petty and vexatious attacks. Christobelle had one near her who could lure her disquiets into happy tranquillity — but Lady Ennismore almost sunk under their distressing influence.

Sir John Wetheral bore all his trials with the resignation of a man who received good and evil things from his Maker's hands, and accepted them as means of evidencing his patience and resignation. He endured his lady's most disagreeable taunts with the fortitude belonging to his estimable character : he only appeared to suffer when those taunts were levelled at the heart-broken, gentle Julia. Lady Wetheral's tyrannical temper seemed irrecoverable even by the operation of time, or gentle forbearance. Mrs. Bevan remarked " that her lady's eyes and manner were peculiarly vehement in their expression, during her reproaches addressed to Lady Ennismore." It *must* have been a powerful feeling which could produce such a change of manner in one whose whole existence had been devoted to the exercise of self-command, and who had ever deprecated the bad taste and uselessness of "scenes;" it must have been an overwhelming feeling of ambition trampled to the earth, which bore down

a mind so keenly alive, so restless in its purposes, and so successful in its schemes.

Christobelle had the blessing of Sir John Spottiswoode's society, to balance her many hours of disquietude. She could turn to him for happiness, when her spirit was sad, and, under his soothing, her mother's harsh remarks were forgotten. Every disagreeable feeling passed away in the sunshine of his presence. She only bent, in grateful acknowledgment, to the Being who had committed her infancy to her father's care, to receive his wise admonitions, and be cautioned to renounce the fearful dictates of ambition. Christobelle saw how it had lured its victims to woe. She knew it had destroyed the happiness of Julia—that it had aimed the death-blow to Clara—that it had worked desolation upon her mother. Every one who drank of the cup which a reckless ambition presented to their lips had tasted a deadly poison, which slowly and surely produced desolation of heart. Christobelle felt she had been spared. She had not been overwhelmed by its cold precepts: she had received strength to endure oppression, and had not bartered peace of mind for the empty glare of worldly distinction. Christobelle was indeed

grateful, as she pondered these things in her mind.

Lady Ennismore was called to a less fortunate destiny. Her spirits were broken by the continual and ruthless observations which were showered upon her by her irritable parent, under the pressure of time unemployed, and the total failure of resource. Lady Wetheral's mind turned to the past, for materials to employ her weakened energies; and the past could only give back harassing recollections. Such recollections produced a constant state of irritation, which was hurtful to herself, and intolerable to those around her. Wetheral Castle appeared the grave of every hope, and the "*oubliette*" to rational, tranquil comfort. The heart of Lady Ennismore was depressed beyond recall, by continued and unsuccessful efforts to appear cheerful under accumulated suffering. It was impossible to give satisfaction to an exacting and imperious mother. She could only weep in privacy, and pray to be "laid by Clara."

Mrs. Spottiswoode was unwearied in her kind visits during Lady Wetheral's illness. The Penelope of former days was the same attached friend at the present hour; and Lady Ennismore felt how blessed was the possession of a gentle

heart, which had clung to her through good and evil report—which never exacted selfish sacrifices, or shrunk from the task of enduring much, to soften the distresses of an uncomplaining spirit. Mrs. Spottiswoode bore the petulant remarks of Lady Wetheral with patient good-humour. If the “blood of the Wycherlys” rose occasionally into her cheeks, and latent fires sparkled in her eye, the door of her lips were hermetically sealed, and she never resented the offensive petulance of a defeated and angry manœuvrer. Her only desire aimed at warding off for a few hours the painful observations which must otherwise have been levelled at two unoffending objects.

Lady Wetheral did not object to receive Mrs. Spottiswoode. However strongly her character approximated to that of her aunt Pynsent in its outline, her manners were less abrupt, and her temper more yielding. Mrs. Spottiswoode had also “crept in” so silently and regularly, that a visit every other day was considered a thing of course; and if Lady Wetheral had any thing particularly disagreeable or offensive to say, she contrived to say it to Mrs. Spottiswoode. Mrs. Spottiswoode bore every thing with smiles: she

knew it spared the feelings of her own friend — the suffering, the injured, and dependent Julia.

Lady Wetheral confined herself entirely to her apartments, and declined all society. She derived no satisfaction from the visits of friends, whom she was sure came on purpose to deride her sorrows. She particularly commanded to be denied to Mrs. Pynsent. She told Mrs. Spottiswoode it was unpleasant to be restricted from communion with her neighbours, but she must be aware her aunt Pynsent was inadmissable from her loud tone of voice, and uncouth way of blurting out offensive remarks. Her aunt was a misery in a sick room, and she only wondered how Clara could endure it, to the exclusion of the mother who had promoted her marriage, and endured so much to effect it.

Lady Wetheral also confided to Mrs. Spottiswoode her opinions upon Christobelle's folly.

“Your brother, Mrs. Spottiswoode, is a very gentlemanly man, but a poor baronet is a sad match for Bell—I will never lend myself to it. I know Sir John allows him to visit here, and Bell is engaged to him in some way or other, I dare say. Perhaps they are waiting for my death? Bell refused a dukedom, and is content to accept a Worcestershire baronet! Can you

believe any thing so degrading? — and waiting, too, for her poor mother's death! This is very dreadful! How can I look any of my neighbours in the face? I am told Lord Farnborough is going to marry Fanny Ponsonby: it serves Bell quite right, and I hope she will feel it severely. A pleasant sight it will be to see the Forfar equipage dashing by, while Bell is only a poor baronet's wife in a britzska. I cannot endure such thoughts. Bevan, where are my salts?"

"But, my dear Lady Wetheral, if my brother makes Christobelle happy, and if he indulges her with all the comforts of life, what more can a human being require?"

Lady Wetheral shuddered.

"The comforts of life! Bread and cheese to eat, and a stuff gown and straw bonnet to wear—is this the vulgar and popular idea of existence? You, Penelope, have married into the family, and are justified in upholding it, but I will never see Bell, if she can endure degradation! My health is sacrificed to outraged feelings! Lady Ennismore, if it is not too much trouble, will you be so considerate as to move this cushion a little higher. Your ladyship has had little practice, I fancy, in the nursing department: it never occurs to you how much I am suffering."

Lady Ennismore silently adjusted the cushion, but the allusion to her banishment from her lord's sick room, renewed the grief of her heart : tears sprang to her patient, expressive eyes. This could not be overlooked by Penelope Spottiswoode.

“Lady Wetheral, I demand, and insist upon the necessity of Lady Ennismore's removal for a few days to Lidham. I must not allow you all to waste away in witnessing each other's depression. Christobelle and Sir John will take Julia's place, while I run away with my friend this very morning. I shall not return to Lidham till you are ready to accompany me, Julia.”

There was “a Pynsent tone” in Mrs. Spottiswoode's speech, which Lady Wetheral felt unable to contend against : her ladyship detested that *Hatton* expression of voice. She replied languidly, with an injured and offended air,

“Pray do as you please, Mrs. Spottiswoode. Every one has done, and, I suppose, *will* do, as they please with me. I am too feeble to resist violent resolutions. I beg to decline having any one forced upon me. Lady Ennismore has renounced control of any kind, and, of course, she will continue to act as she thinks proper, without consulting her mother. Sir John and Christo-

belle, I suppose, will visit me, without being ‘offered.’ I conclude my family will relieve my solitude voluntarily, though I am considered of secondary importance. Bevan, where is my pocket-handkerchief?”

“In your hand, my lady.”

“Oh, very well. I wish I was equally blind to more distressing annoyances. I wish I could lose sight as easily of other things.”

Mrs. Spottiswoode turned a resolutely deaf ear to all covert attacks. It was imperative, in her opinion, to withdraw Lady Ennismore to Lidham, and the harsh conduct of Lady Wetheral only riveted her resolution. Sir John concurred in her views. He was aware his daughter endured much, and he wished her to be removed altogether from a scene so destructive to her peace. It was impossible to hope Julia could ever regain tranquillity, when the wounds of her heart were torn open by daily and hourly invective. Christobelle and himself would attend the querulous invalid, in patient hope that time would soften the asperity proceeding from a diseased mind, but he saw the absolute necessity of withdrawing Lady Ennismore from her attendance. Sir John Wetheral

hoped she would remain a long season in the society and hospitality of Lidham.

Yet Julia quitted her father with great reluctance. She knew her sister was happy, and supported by the occasional visits of Sir John Spottiswoode. Her heart was occupied by a powerful attachment, and sorrow had not thrown a mantle of gloom over *her* young visions yet. Her affection was blessed by a father's approval, and the smiles of rejoicing friends ; yes, Christobelle could contemplate her futurity fearlessly—but who would, or could, pour balm upon her father's solitary hours ? His study was still a sanctuary, but he carried into its precincts a disturbed and heavy spirit. Julia could not bear the idea of quitting her father.

Mrs. Spottiswoode smoothed every thought which could ruffle her friend's equanimity, and planed away all difficulties. She unburdened her mind to the four friends who surrounded her, as she hastily partook of sandwiches.

“ My dear Sir John, I have achieved a scheme, which will set my Julia's heart at rest, and yours, too. I counsel you to keep the ‘ poor Worcestershire baronet ’ at Wetheral, till happier times arrive. Why should not he bear some share of the evil, when the good is before

him? and by his sparkling eyes, and intelligent glances at Christobelle, I judge he is willing to undertake the task. This is my advice, as far as concerns *yourself*; now for my brother-in-law: listen, young man, and be guided! I counsel you to be gentle mannered, and prompt in action, as I have been. *Creep in*, as I have done; and bear all irritating remarks, as I have borne them. Learn to be enduring, patient, and silent, and I will undertake to promise you sufficient success. Who undertakes to refute my words?"

Mrs. Spottiswoode looked round at her auditors, but there was no refutation. Sir John Spottiswoode alone replied, and he only spoke his eager wishes to assist in tranquillizing Lady Wetheral's objections to his suit. He would wait in patience and persevering attentions, to attain that blessed reward of his labours, if it was required, even for years.

"Six months will do, John, if you are politic. Sir John Wetheral, pray lead Lady Ennismore to my carriage, and I will follow, after a few words in a corner with my brother."

Sir John led out his daughter, while Christobelle clung to her sister's hand. She was going to lose her for an indefinite period, and she

should miss her gentle voice and affectionate smile. Spottiswoode would be with her, and she could not but own his society was a charm to balance a thousand ills. Nevertheless, she must miss Julia every hour. She would have the satisfaction, however, of knowing how much she would be prized by Mr. and Mrs. Spottiswoode.

Mrs. Spottiswoode did not long detain her friends. Her words were few, and decisive.

“John, that unhappy woman is as mad as a March hare. I never can believe her sane, therefore, I bear with her. Let her abuse you and your friends; and allow her to speak whatever she thinks of aunty Pynsent, and I am sure you will become necessary to her. Her manners are so completely changed, that I am confident she is deranged, and it is no use quarrelling with mad people.”

“It is an extraordinary method of making oneself acceptable, Penelope. I am not sure I can endure to hear my friends abused, but I will endeavour to be pleasing, and you may be sure I shall ‘creep in’ after Christobelle. Once fairly admitted into the invalid’s room, you need not fear my second dismissal.”

“Very well, I have no more to say, then. I

will not relinquish Julia, as long as I can prevail upon her to remain at Lidham. She is enduring too much for human nature to bear. Farewell."

Mrs. Spottiswoode then joined her friends.

Sir John Wetheral pressed Mrs. Spottiswoode's hand, as he assisted her into the carriage. "Accept," he said, "the grateful thanks of a father for this kind and thoughtful step. May *you* never be called to sorrows which your warm heart is seeking to alleviate in your friends!"

Mrs. Spottiswoode returned the pressure.

"I do not ask you to come to us very often, because I know you cannot exist long from Julia; but be sure you always bring good news with you from Wetheral. God bless you all!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

Lady Ennismore recovered some degree of tranquillity under the soothing influences of her friends, who congregated round her at Lidham, but her spirits never recovered their tone of elasticity. She met the Pynsents with severe distress, and struggled visibly for fortitude, as recollections of the past crowded to memory; but when that fearful interview was once effected, Anna Maria's society was productive of much good. Tom Pynsent was unchanged; he was the same excellent and honourable creature: he was an affectionate and valued husband; they appeared to be, and were, the happiest couple in the world. No wonder Anna Maria looked younger and handsomer than ever. Her heart was at rest. How warmly had her father spoken of Tom Pynsent's good qualities. Alas! *she* had preferred splendid misery, and was now

reaping a harvest of woe. She would not, dared not, think too deeply.

Lady Ennismore could contemplate Mrs. Boscawen with unmixed satisfaction. She was changed in person, and improved in manner. Mr. Boscawen was proud of his lady ; and how could he help it, since he was, in her eyes, the best and handsomest of created beings ? It must be a new and delightful existence to the once alarming, grim-looking, though excellent, Mr. Boscawen.

The sight and sounds of those she loved was of important benefit to Lady Ennismore. The accents of affection, the voice of mirth, the forms of her long banished friends gliding before her, roused her dormant energies, and awakened her to the joys of life. She paid short visits to Hatton and Brierly, to see her nephews and nieces ; and, though her lips never uttered a remark, Mrs. Spottiswoode fancied her more languid and pale after her brief absence. Doubtless, the “ rural sports ” at both places were too powerful for her weakened frame and shattered nerves.

Lady Ennismore continued three months with Mrs. Spottiswoode. Sir John Wetheral brought a bulletin daily of his ladies’ health, and each

account was less favourable in its purport. Christobelle wrote despondingly upon the subject to her sister. She regretted to say her poor Spottiswoode failed in all his patient exertions to win her mother's approbation. She was happy to think there was no cause of complaint against him of any serious nature. His crime consisted in having stepped in between her poor mother's ambition and a dukedom; and this would ever be unpardonable in her eyes. Her mother was relentless towards Spottiswoode. She would not pronounce his name, or receive a message from him. She only alluded to him as the "poor baronet," or "the man whom Sir John upheld." It was vain to hope against hope. Her mother's dislike grew more powerful as her strength declined, and it would end only in the grave. Her mother received no one; she appeared to have renounced society, and her movements were exclusively confined to her own range of apartments. Mrs. Daniel Higgins was admitted frequently, because she had been the depository of her lady's secrets in days of yore, and was now a patient listener to her regrets; but, beyond that, all was silent at Wetheral. Christobelle considered her father in much better spirits. He had become apparently reconciled to her

mother's change of habits ; and he was more cheerful, more called forth, she thought, than when her mother was the dominant spirit. It might be that his mind was at rest concerning his children ; that he was no longer dreading plots and systems, and was gratified by the constant society of Spottiswoode, who was so attentive and companionable to him. She could not tell, but so it was. She was distressed to think they were so happy together, when her poor mother's situation was so cheerless, and her health so visibly declining !

Such was the tenor of Christobelle's communications to Lidham, and they renewed Lady Ennismore's anxiety to return to Wetheral. She longed to relieve Christobelle from some portion of her fatigues ; and, above all, her spirit flew back to her father. She could never sufficiently value his parental anxieties, or the protection he was affording her sorrow. A father's presence was a shield from every worldly blast ; and the perfect seclusion of Wetheral Castle suited best with her present state. Lidham was almost too gay, though she only met looks and words of kindness and approbation. It was time that Christobelle should also enjoy a period of happy communion with Sir John Spottiswoode ; and

that period could not arrive, unless some one assumed the reins in her place, and bore the disagreeables of the nursing department. Mrs. Spottiswoode's good sense acquiesced entirely in Lady Ennismore's reasonings.

“My dear friend, *you* are perfectly right, and *I* am only perfectly sorry to lose you. I anticipate much comfort in the present state of things, however dismally Christobelle represents them. You will all be happier at Wetheral, and I shall see your face beaming with smiles, in spite of Lady Wetheral's monastic retirement. Don't look distressed, Julia; I am going to explain myself.”

“My mother has received an incurable wound, Penelope!”

“I know that. Lady Wetheral has received an incurable wound in her ambition, and that has closed her hopes and pleasures on this side the grave. She has no child to plan for—not one now to sacrifice. All is ended which employed her mind, and fed the craving passion of her soul. Her resources are cut off, and she will never more resume her position in society. Is it not wisely ordered? If Lady Wetheral recovered her health, would she not be scheming for her grandchildren, and pouring her besetting

foible into their innocent minds? My dear Julia, enough misery has been originated. Let it end here. Let us not wish it otherwise."

Lady Ennismore could not refute her friend's argument. Mrs. Spottiswoode continued.

"Wetheral Castle will never, perhaps, resume its festive scenes, for there has been too much of evil connected with their remembrance; but you will enjoy profound peace of heart, and receive your friends without alarm. If Lady Wetheral remains secluded in her apartments, there is no reason why the rest of the family should not enjoy themselves: forgive me if I say it will prove *true* enjoyment."

Mrs. Spottiswoode spoke truly. Wetheral Castle did become a home of domestic peace, because its restless mistress no longer wielded the sceptre of power, to transform the elements of good into the instruments of evil. Lady Wetheral sunk into ill health and apathy, irrecoverable. Her mind and body seemed stunned into torpor, by two events which she had not foreseen, and could not parry—the refusal of a dukedom by Christobelle, and the flight of Lady Ennismore from her home. These two events were ever upon her thoughts, and in her speech, because "she had particularly arranged each

splendid match, and was doomed to be foiled by her own children in their accomplishment. She knew her energies were worn down, and her strength exhausted. She could not walk three steps from her sofa without fatigue, and the least noise produced severe nervous attacks. She was a pretty specimen of maternal cares! She advised all parents to allow their headstrong daughters to marry whoever would encumber themselves with them; for marry they would, and it was hopeless to endeavour to lead their tastes in a proper channel. She expected Mrs. Higgins would let *her* little girl grow up in insubordination, and the child would most likely marry a bricklayer, instead of looking up to a man in a well established grocery-business. She detested mean minds."

Lord Ennismore and his mother, the Dowager-countess, appeared again at Bedinfield. Her ladyship's point was gained. She had recovered entire control over the destinies of Bedinfield, freed from continual alarms, lest her son should escape her powerful influence, and become infatuated by the loveliness and yielding disposition of his gentle wife. But she did not long enjoy the fruits of her unnatural conduct. Ere a year had elapsed after the separation recorded,

Lord Ennismore sank into the family vault at Bedinfield, unwept and unhonoured, save by the generous-hearted creature whom he had not the capacity to appreciate.

When Lady Ennismore received the information of her unfortunate lord's decease, she wept to think how desolate had been the existence of a human being, born to become the tool and victim of his mother's insatiable love of power ; and she wept to remember he had died without the consolation of being watched over by a wife, who would have acted honourably and faithfully in her duties.

Sir John Wetheral also suffered. He felt a conviction that his own want of firmness had fostered his lady's ambitious turn of mind ; and he dwelt upon the melancholy idea that his own hand had bestowed, however unwillingly—that his consent had been extorted, however painful to himself—to give a beloved child to the imbecile Lord Ennismore. It was a thought he never could banish from his memory, and it pained him most when Julia's society became his greatest comfort. It was, however, vain to regret the past. Sir John's mild nature was unequal to contend with the persevering system adopted by his lady, and he could never com-

prehend or combat effectually her unceasing efforts to forward her views upon the minds of her children. The Gertrude of his early affections was now severed from his companionship, and he turned to Julia, to receive from her hands the care and attention necessary to his future comfort.

Lady Ennismore fully requited her parent's hope. She sought no society beyond her own family, and the little circle of friends who had ever valued her affectionate heart. Mrs. Spottiswoode, the friend and beloved companion—that solace to earthly tribulations—that gift tendered to few—was near her. Hatton was a home of affection, and Brierly threw open its portals with triumph at her approach. All had respected and honoured the hapless wife, and all surrounded the released widow in silent gratulation. Mrs. Pynsent publicly declared “It was a deep trick of that woman Ennismore, whom she never could endure; and if the poor young Julia Wetheral had not fallen into the hands of two she-Philistines, she never would have married that sickly little chap, whom the mother led about by the nose. Some things which should be nameless were already come to pass, and she hoped Old Nick would fly away with all manœuvring

mothers. A certain lady was shorn of her beams, who expected to command the world ; and after brandishing her arms, and catching all the prime matches up, she was cut down into a mighty small space, with an evil conscience to chat with. If Lady Ennismore would be advised, she should counsel her to change her name and title, by marrying a comfortable Shropshire lad. There were plenty unprovided for."

But Lady Ennismore declined all thoughts of marriage, and devoted herself to the comforts of her parents. Colonel Neville wrote, at the expiration of her mourning, and he laid claim to her compassion, in consideration of the patience and constancy which had accompanied his involuntary and fervent attachment. He had condemned himself to a perpetual banishment, even from the country which she inhabited. But now that the bar was withdrawn, the hour of disclosure was arrived, and Julia must have respected the love which consumed him. She could bear witness that he had never breathed an unhallowed sentiment, or endeavoured to take advantage of her situation, during their long and constant association in Florence.

Julia sighed as she read the declaration of

Neville, but her heart renounced a second engagement. “No,” she wrote in reply to her lover’s epistle—“no, my heart has suffered too much disquietude to enter upon fresh ties. I feel a calmness and consolation in watching over my father’s comfort, and taking charge of my stricken mother, which my married life denied me. That portion of my existence was a period of deep misery, and it has broken down my hopes and my spirits. Be happy, Neville, with a woman who has not been called to suffering, and forget one who will never more trust in man, or in herself. I will not give hope, for you do not deserve to be treated lightly, and I cannot now meet your wishes. May I soon hear you have met with a woman deserving your esteem, and that your days are devoted to her happiness. My own days are consecrated to the father whose counsel I would not heed, and who has suffered so much through my obstinate folly.”

And what shall be said of Christobelle? Her portion was not the cup of bitterness, though her patience was severely tested. Lady Wetheral became indifferent to all passing events so gradually, and her mind dwelt so little upon any thing unconnected with her own ease and

immediate gratification, that Mrs. Daniel Higgins adventured to touch lightly upon the subject, during one of her visits.

“I am happy, my lady, to be hearing of Miss Chrystal’s likelihood, at last, to marry Sir John Spottiswoode. Higgins thinks it a very pretty match, and he has visited Alverton more than once, and admires the place extremely. For ever and a day!—to think of Miss Chrystal’s turn being come!”

“I know nothing about it, Thompson, and I don’t care. The Worcestershire man shall never enter *my* room, though he is quite good enough for a young lady who refused a dukedom. If Julia would attract the old Duke of Forfar, now she is at liberty, I should still recover my health; but I am laid on the shelf. No one cares about my health. Lady Ennismore might easily win his Grace; only, I dare say, she would run away from him, as she did from Lord Ennismore.”

Christobelle married Sir John Spottiswoode soon after Lady Wetheral’s assurance to Mrs. Higgins that she “did not care” about the affair, and no one apprised her ladyship of the actual solemnization. She never asked who was the “Lady Spottiswoode” whom people talked

so much about, and always addressed her by the title of Miss Wetheral.

Did Christobelle ever repent her refusal of a dukedom, or experience a repentant feeling that she had given her whole heart to the husband of her choice? No. Life brings too many cares to allow of perfect enjoyment upon earth, but Christobelle never regretted the vows she paid at the altar: she never regretted the hour when she became the bride of Spottiswoode, and exchanged Wetheral Castle for the tranquil groves of Alverton.

THE END.

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